



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>



3 3433 07604553 7

A MOTHER IN EXILE



NBO
Mother

1

$$\begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$$

(D)

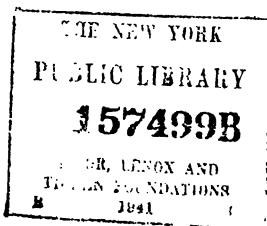
•

A MOTHER IN EXILE

A MOTHER IN EXILE



BOSTON
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY
1914
c.o.



Copyright, 1914,
By LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY.

All rights reserved

**PROPERTY
OF THE
NEW YORK
SOCIETY LIBRARY**

Printers
S. J. PARRHILL & Co., BOSTON, U.S.A.

APR 16 1915

F

*"I have lived and I have loved;
I have waked and I have slept;
I have sung and I have danced,
I have smiled and I have wept.
I have won and wasted treasure,
I have had my fill of pleasure.
And all these things were weariness,
And some of them were dreariness.
And all these things — but two things
Were emptiness and pain.
And love — it was the best of them,
And sleep — worth all the rest of them."*

A MOTHER IN EXILE

I

MY DAUGHTER,—

I have called for you during endless nights, but the morning always dispelled your image. I have listened for your footsteps during long years, but life is fast closing upon me, and I now feel that you will never come. Never with the living eye shall I again behold your sweet face. Thus I send you this my last message.

All my letters to you have been unanswered; these my words might still remain unheeded, had they not taken another significance. To them there can come *no* reply, and it feels almost like joy to know that hope deferred with its long trail of anguish no longer awaits me.

There are many things a mother explains to her child in daily intercourse, which I have wished to tell you during the years that separate us. Some are slender, almost too trivial to put down, were things in themselves ever great or small. It is we who give them their import. To model you in the spirit, as I have done in the flesh, to form your heart, to develop your mind, such was my right and prerogative; but it has been taken away from me. Across the abyss of time no tidings of you have ever come to me. I have only known motherhood's anguish and its desolation.

A mother tells her child about her life. You have grown up, looking upon me as a stranger, even as your

enemy, for the notions of right and wrong have been distorted in your young mind. Affection from child to mother is not a natural thing. It grows, is fostered like a delicate plant; but every impulse of your heart that asked for me has been stifled.

It is that you should see things in their true light that I have gathered some of the loose leaves of the book of my life, for you are no longer the child who was taken away from me, you are a woman now.

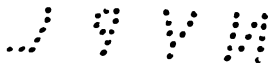
Let me tell you once again how constantly I have thought of you in that Past which is still the Present for me.

Two events stand out boldly.

First your birth. You came to me on the shores of Lake Leman like a snowdrop in winter. Hoar-frost and snow surrounded us, but you were like a wave of sunshine from my Indian home, like your father's spirit come to greet me. Your brothers were born before, but I never yet had felt the thrill of joy of a life given to me until I touched you, dear little daughter. I still smell the sweet breath of violets you brought me, when first you clung to my breast.

Then again I see you as when we parted—nothing told me that it was for ever. In my last dream shall I still hear your bitter sobbing, as you said to him who took you from me: "Say nothing against my dear mother, for I love her." You were a brave child, little daughter, and those who wronged me so deeply struck deadliest when they killed in you loyalty to your mother and the courage which accompanied it.

You are a woman in years now, though to my heart's longing you still are the child, the dainty little girl with long golden hair and my mother's brown eyes—they were your father's too—who clung to me with all her



strength, until they tore you away from my arms by force. Sixteen years lie between us, and you lay on my lap when I was your age. I hope that you are a wife and a mother too, and know love's joys and sorrows, for there is no greater prize in life and nothing sweeter than the love which binds woman to man. This I say to you, I who have tasted most things, the sweet and the bitter too—and both were good in their way—who have known love's ecstasy and its bereavement.

We whole-souled women are made like that—and I hope you have grown up to be one of them—the outward pageant, fortune, position, intellectual power, even beauty, woman's crown, they all fade before the strong, all-powerful mastery of love.

There is only one thing which for a woman is a stronger rock to lean upon—for love is born, and love dies—and this is character, the friend she is to herself. When all that made life worth living abandoned me, I found in myself the courage to go on. We all need this strength drawn from ourselves. But to keep the fount living, we must build our tents on the summits of life, where we may sometimes touch the white garments of the gods.

In the pride and joy of fulfilled motherhood, my message to you, child, might have been different, but the years have added a wealth of experience bought by suffering, and have taken nothing from its tenderness.

4 A MOTHER IN EXILE

II

I WOULD like to tell you how I first met your father.

I was travelling from Australia to America to study medicine, coming via Europe, to visit my guardian, Madame de Saint-Jean. The Australian passengers had to wait at Aden for the belated "Indians" before proceeding by train across the desert to Alexandria; so instead of waiting I went to Cairo to visit Marquis Giraldo, my mother's old bachelor cousin. There for the first time I saw the East. My memory still lingers on that dream of "A Thousand and One Nights."

At last the P. and O. boat lay in the dazzling midday sun in the harbour of Alexandria, waiting for the passengers. The dragoman had tried to insist upon accompanying me, but I had dismissed him, and was alone in a small boat with some evil-looking Arabs who were taking me on board.

I was tired with the excitement and fatigue of the last days, when weeks had been pressed into hours, and the burning June sun, against which my small straw-bonnet offered but little protection, overpowered me. I felt ill and in a sort of dream. Still I had the sense to wonder why we were only going round and round instead of making headway. The men were chattering together. Suddenly they turned to me, and with shouts and gestures, eked out by their few words of bad French, asked for money. I gave them all I possessed. But they wanted more.

The pains in my head were growing intolerable. I assured the Arabs I had nothing left, and entreated them to row on; but they only repeated their threats and told me the steamer was leaving. In despair I suddenly got up, waved my hands, and called out as loudly as I could.

There was a signal, a boat lowered, and in a few minutes I was on deck.

I had got a sunstroke and lay for some time unconscious. At Brindisi they carried me on deck to see Madame de Saint-Jean's correspondent, who brought me money and had made every arrangement for me to proceed by rail; but I was too ill yet to move.

After he left I lay in a long chair on the deserted deck with my lap full of gold. A little urchin came and asked me to buy some apricots.

"I have no change," I said sadly, for I have ever been fond of fruit and sweets of all kinds.

Close beside me a voice said:

"I think you are the lady who has been so ill. Will you allow me to get you some peaches?"

"Apricots," I said smilingly, and then: "Are you French?"

I do not remember if I ate apricots that day or not—for they *were* apricots, though Allan always said they were peaches, until we agreed to differ.

This is how I met your father, little daughter. Many years have passed; still it seems to-day, and I remember his very words. They will seem trivial and unimportant to most people; but for us they were the heralds of love.

III

NEXT day the boat touched Ancona. A drive in his care would do me good, so the stranger of the apricots told the doctor. I was only too willing to go.

We went together to the cathedral San Ciriaco on Monte Guasco, and on the way your father told me how from the moment I had come on board, he had been interested in me. Evidently he had harassed the stewardess and the lady who shared my cabin with questions about my progress.

When we reached the church, built on the spot where once stood a temple of Venus, he got out to visit it, but came back almost immediately.

"It is such a waste of time to be looking at pictures, when I can be with you," were his words. He threw coins to the small Italians who crowded round our carriage, and when I wondered, "I am so happy," he said.

Love had entered our lives, little daughter—love at first sight, the strong, all-absorbing torrent of great, passionate love. Driving back, he told me that he was on his way to Scotland, his birthplace, and that India was his home. And I, how, from my childhood, the East had been the land of my dreams.

"They will soon become a reality, for you are mine. You will go back with me, and we shall visit all those beautiful sights together. When we are in Venice, we will get married at the Consulate, and return to India at once."

Was this love? My heart had never yet beat more quickly for any man. I had only known one strong love, and this had been for my darling mother. Books and study now filled my life, and there seemed no place in it for love. And then . . . my wedding day, to my girlish mind, ought to be a day of rejoicing for the whole world. I could not be married to this stranger *so ganz ohne Sang und Klang*. Still, even then I knew that love had come to me, not happily and peacefully as it comes to some, but triumphantly, like the whirlwind sweeping everything before it; and, come what may, I would blindly follow its bidding.

At Venice I found letters from my guardian, telling me not to proceed before I was quite well. A dear old American lady with her husband promised to take care of me. They were interested in both of us, and, I believe, remained in Venice simply for our sakes. I stayed ten days there, so did your father—ten days.

"Like wreaths of roses twining
Around this heart of love."

Every evening we went out in a gondola, Allan and I. We were so happy, little daughter, and as merry as children. I will tell you about two little things that happened:

There was a pink coral necklace which he wished to buy for me. The price they asked for it was preposterous. To pay it would have been folly. My enemies always accused me of extravagance. You may have heard of it. It is true that all through life I have loved to spend money royally, for I never could see that money has any other use. Always, however, I strongly objected to paying an absurd price. But I was going to tell you about the necklace.

It became an obsession. The coral merchants used to bring it to Allan's hotel under every possible pretext. When we took a gondola, there they were in another. We were seated on the Piazza, eating those ices of which the Venetians have alone the secret—suddenly the necklace appeared. When we walked through the narrow streets, it followed us in the midst of a procession. This went on until one day an old woman stopped me on the Piazzetta.

"Beware of those beads," she said, "they mean tears."

Love seems a giant, child, and laughs at presages. Allan now insisted that I should accept the necklace, to "pacify Fate," as he said. . . . Often in other years, which I also remember, I have run those cold stones through my fingers, and never without a shudder.

Our visit to the Lido was to be a pilgrimage, for it was here that Musset had left "*son pauvre cœur*." The glorious sunshine, love's presence, and my bad Italian, made it one of our merriest days. As we went along, the gondoliers spoke of the *bagno* we were bound for. A *bagno* with galley-slaves was the only kind which occurred to us in mediæval Venice. We asked many questions, but were never able to make the answers fit in. At last, laughing, laughing all the time, we landed—and found that the *bagno* was a fashionable bathing resort.

There came a shadow over our felicity. Under the bridge of Rialto, when we were dreaming aloud of what the years would bring, Allan suddenly grew very serious. He told me there were difficulties in our way, that his aunts and maiden sisters would disapprove of his marriage. It was the first time he had spoken to me about them. I was proud and high-spirited, *faite toute d'une*

seule pièce—a bad thing for a woman. I could not or would not understand what *they* had to do between him and me. Our love felt so great and powerful. It was set apart on such lofty heights, that everything beside it seemed small and futile.

But, in spite of this, nothing can tarnish the memory of those hours. We used to sit in a gondola watching the sun set over the lagoons, and listening to the distant Ave Maria coming across the waters from the Salute. Nothing in the world seemed as good as our love. Such joy I wish for you, dear little daughter.

IV

A FORTNIGHT later my guardian and I were in Paris, and Allan in his northern home with his father, aunts, and sisters. They were the Fates who presided over my destiny.

It was the year of the Great Exhibition, but I remember nothing of the wonders I daily saw, for sorrow had taken the place of joy.

His first letters from London, where he stayed some days with his brother, breathed deep, tender affection. "Take care of our love," he wrote. "Remember that it was born on the waves of the Mediterranean, cradled by the Adriatic with her sweetest songs."

After his arrival in the north there had been silence, and when letters came, they were full of reticence. One, especially, made me very unhappy. "You remember I told you that my family would be against our

marriage. It is true that I know nothing of you and your people, and when Polly said you might be an 'adventuress,' I did not know how to reply."

It seemed so cruel, when she had never seen me and knew nothing about me.

Six weeks after our parting in the cold grey dawn at Culoz, he came back to me. It was a glorious afternoon, and Paris was *en fête*. The separation had made a woman of the girl he had left. Pride and love had both been deeply wounded. Fortunately joy and hope are eternal and always spring up again. In that supreme hour of reunion the past threw its spell around us. Family, prejudices, all he had feared, all I had hated when separated, everything vanished. I blamed his people, chiefly Polly, and we decided that their name even should be banished for ever. Were we not together? And did they not wish to part us?

My guardian belonged to the old school, and though in years to come they were the best of friends, looked upon your father at first with distrust. I remember that she did not like his jokes, and told him so one day.

"You know it is only fun," he said; "you must not take such things seriously. If I told you that the English fleet was in the Seine, what would you think?"

"I should believe you," she replied.

Often in the evening we sat together on the balcony, looking down at the gay crowd in the Avenue de l'Opéra, wishing, two of us at least, that we were once again on the Piazza San Marco. There we had lived in Paradise; but we never quite found the way in again.

Time went on, still nothing was settled as to the future. One evening my guardian told me that she was returning to Switzerland, and that I must come with her.

I am a dreamer, but at the same time decided in action. All at once the fallacy of our love struck me. Come what may, I must know the truth at once. I took a cab and went straight to Allan's hotel. For the first time I bared my soul before him, and told him how he had wounded me, the bitterness which filled my heart, my resentment against his people. I declared that it was my wish he should leave me for ever. All this took but a few minutes, then I rose and left him. He had scarcely spoken—merely acquiesced.

I went back and told Madame what I had done. She was frightened at my strained expression, and wanted me to stay the night beside her, but I was calm, as I have ever been in the great moments of my life. Once in my room, I threw myself dressed on my bed and slept until late next morning.

My guardian wished me to remain in Paris and study under my cousin, a great surgeon, but I decided to leave at once for America. Whilst I was packing, the waiter announced *le monsieur anglais* who had come to return something I had lent him in Venice. It was Allan. He entreated me to stay a few days longer in Paris, and, after much persuasion, Madame consented.

Still he looked troubled, and there was no real happiness.

"Ask him some day after dinner what is the matter with him," said my physician-cousin who, like a true Frenchman, was greatly interested in the progress of our love. "That is the very best time of the day for an Englishman."

That evening, in one of my merry, mad moods I told him the story of "The Three Wishes."

"I grant you one," I said, "for I know that you are not happy. What do you wish?"

"Ask Madame to invite Polly. I want her to meet you," was the reply, which came like a thunderbolt.

She came.

I had expected an ardent, impetuous nature, someone strong in her likes and dislikes. He brought back from the Gare du Nord a gentle, elderly maid who seemed as guileless as a child, and as if she could not harm a fly. Her ignorance of the simplest things of life I have never met with in a woman before or since. She was my guest, my guardian had invited her, and at the same time she had wounded me most deeply and unjustly.

I shall never forget the hours between her arrival and dinner. For the first time I heard the Scotch accent and the slow drawl which often accompanies it. It struck my highly strung nerves as most ludicrous, and I began to laugh without being able to stop. Every time she opened her mouth, it so tickled me that I had to make every possible effort for self-control. I checked myself—I apologised—it was all useless, the laughter always came back.

I have paid for it in later years with tears of blood.

There was no friction between Polly and me during her stay in Paris. She struck me as old-fashioned, different from all I had ever seen before; but on the whole I think I rather liked her. All through life I have been lenient towards ignorance. I thought her judgment of me merely stupidity, "*und gegen die Dummheit kämpfen die Götter selbst vergebens.*"

Polly decided with her brother that I must come to Scotland and be presented to the family. She put it very nicely, and told me that I must be married there. My guardian strongly opposed the suggestion, which was against all precedent, and forbade me to go. Unfortunately, no one in life has ever been able to in-

fluence me when my feelings were in play. Thus, setting aside Madame's judgment, which was due to experience and her love for me, I left with Allan and his sister for Scotland.

V

WE reached the northern town which took you from me, on a bleak October evening. From the very first I felt a stranger there. It was raining in torrents. During all the visits of my first fifteen years of married life I scarcely ever saw the sun in Scotland. Allan told me that they often had beautiful weather. It seemed scarcely credible then. I do remember, though, in after years, seeing King Street illumined with light and warmth. The gardens were full of sun and flowers, the breeze wafted to me sweet perfume. As for me, I no longer minded rain or sunshine then. My heart was aching for you, child. There was scarcely half an hour's walking distance between us; still you were as far as if worlds parted us.

On her way back Polly had become loquacious. Allan and she both told me about the beauty and refinement of their native town. The rain fell mercilessly as we drove through the dark streets where all seemed dead—for it was Sunday.

When we reached the house—you have been brought up in that semi-detached villa with its small patch of ground—Allan's father received us. He had evidently made up his mind to like me, for he was most kind and

much concerned about the long, cold journey. I then saw his other two unmarried daughters and sisters. They were amiable and obliging, but without any character of their own, mere shadows of Polly, who ruled the household, as I saw at once, with a rod of iron.

Allan seemed shy, and spoke less than ever. Soon he left me alone with them and I felt greatly embarrassed. Then a cold supper followed. I noticed much display and very little real comfort. I would have so much liked a simple hot dish after my journey, but I did not mind much. Afterwards the servants were called in, and long prayers read. This was very strange to me.

What I think about religion I cannot tell you now. It is not a subject to be thrown in; but must be discussed with due reverence. This only, my child, I am perhaps the most religious of beings, though I belong to no creed invented by men, and some call me a Pagan. I never again went to family prayers, simply because I found no pleasure in them, and was not in touch with those present. This decision, which seemed so natural to me, annoyed Polly intensely, especially as your father took the opportunity of being also absent.

I tried hard during my visit to become "one of them," as they were always saying, but I utterly failed. I wished to succeed, for I saw that Allan clung to his home as only Scotch people do. I was a child in most things then—after all, I was only seventeen—and knew little of life. It took me very long to learn. The power of environment and heredity was unknown to me—and the former is the stronger. I only noticed how different Allan was from when I first knew him. Away from them, he was always my own; but from the moment he set foot on Scotch soil, even in our happiest days, he was a changed man.

Your grandfather's ideas, and those of his sisters and daughters, concerning France were ludicrous, if they were not so bad. To them the French were Jehovah's outcasts, and every Frenchwoman a daughter of Heth. Have they brought you up in those prejudices, child? They had some vague notions about the Frenchmen who took refuge in England at the time of the Great Revolution, and evidently believed them unfit to be anything but dancing, music, or language teachers—the *sans-culottes* were indecent people who went about without trousers! I was to marry a Scotsman. I should be Scotch. I quite believed it was my duty to change my nationality, but I had a strong individuality which I was not able to suppress in a day. I was willing to love Scotland, I tried hard to be Scotch—in all but the accent I did all I could—but only remained myself.

Petite, I so often have asked myself if you speak with that terrible intonation!

VI

“Clarens, by heavenly feet thy paths are trod,
Undying love, who here ascends a throne
To which the steps are mountains.”

WE were married in Switzerland.

One day early in December hoar-frost and ice wove Nature into a fairy vision for our wedding-day.

The bridal coaches took the guests from Madame de Saint-Jean's château in Clarens by the road which winds round the Lake of Geneva to the small chapel at Mon-

treux. I drove with Madame, and with us were your aunts, who had come with me from Scotland to be my bridesmaids.

Lake Leman lay on our right like a huge sapphire. The Alps, shrouded from head to foot in their kingly mantle of snow, sparkled in the dazzling sunshine like myriads of diamonds. The horses' hoofs fell noiselessly on the soft white carpet spread in my honour, and every tread was making my heart beat faster. At last they were taking me to your father, to be his own for ever.

He had arrived three days before, but the thousand arrangements, the civil marriage at the Consulate, the preparations for our departure—we were going straight to India—had given us no time to ourselves.

Allan was waiting in the vestry to greet me. I, as if afraid he might still be taken from me, pushed the long train and veil aside, and there, before them all, clasped him in my two outstretched arms.

I see us entering the small chapel where you so often have sat beside me. It had been made a bed of flowers, and the organist was playing Lohengrin's wedding march to welcome us. Of the ceremony I remember little. The kind Scotch pastor, to please us, read the beautiful English marriage service, and then, with his blessing, told us that we now belonged one to the other until "death should us part."

In the hotel where you, my Edelweiss, were born seven years later, Madame had arranged our wedding breakfast. A roast peacock with its plumage was carried round the table; there were speeches and many kind wishes. Madame alone never spoke a word, nor did she smile at me, but sat silent and pale as a ghost. I am afraid I did not trouble much. Afterwards she bitterly reproached me for it. There was only one thing

of value in that hour for me. Nothing else had the power to rejoice or grieve. He was mine.

At three o'clock we left in Madame's carriage, followed by kind wishes and showers of rice. You remember the steep incline leading from the hotel to the lake. In later years your childish feet have often trod it. At the bottom of this slope we met the wedding coaches, all beribboned and bedecked, as is the fashion there, returning to fetch the guests.

"I shall always regret we were not in sledges," said Allan. "At least let us have one of those carriages. They are more worthy of the day and my Queen."

He opened the door and jumped out before I could think. Then followed one of the greatest surprises of my life. I had never seen him carry a parcel. In Venice he had always taken a porter for the merest trifle. Now, throwing his big travelling coat down on the snow, he lifted at lightning speed the two heavy portmanteaux from our carriage to the other, as if to the manner born. Then he carried me over.

"The snow must not wet your feet," he said.

We had booked our rooms in the Grand Hotel at Ouchy two days before. Allan had asked one of his sisters to go with us to choose them, "so as not to let them know that we are coming as newly married people." I could not understand that. I would have liked the whole world to know, and it took me all my strength of will not to tell it to them then and there.

How did they know? We both looked so matter of fact, at least we thought we did. Perhaps they were better judges than we gave them credit for. . . . Not only the *salon*, but every nook had been made into a bridal bower with fresh flowers—to Allan's dismay and my intense joy.

I am shy by nature and very diffident in showing my deepest emotions. Those who told you the contrary do not know me, my child. To cover my embarrassment I went to the adjoining room to get my things opened and take out some needlework. Your father followed me and once again surprised me. All his nonchalance had disappeared as if by enchantment; he unbuckled and unstrapped all my belongings, proving most helpful and kind. Then we went back to the sitting-room and sat in two armchairs by the fireside, like old married people. He rang the bell.

"Bring me *The Times*," he told the waiter.

It was brought and he turned to me:

"Now I will explain Gladstone's policy to you."

I confess this great problem was not made very clear to me that night.

VII

It is not to touch upon the events which crowd into my life that I have come to you, child. For years I have tried to forget that I once lived, though sometimes, I confess, I have been weak and have conjured up my dead. They have come back to me, some laughing as in the days of old, but more often they wept. When I decided to disentomb the past, it was to speak to you about your father, child, to speak about myself too—so that you might know me and understand the tragedy of my life.

We spent the dawn of our wedded happiness in ice-bound Ouchy. As we walked through the narrow, slip-

pery streets, Allan in his big ulster holding me to him so that I might not fall, I told him about the days I had spent here in past summers.

"Never mind," he said, "I did not know you then. I am certain those days were not one-thousandth part as good as these, nor as all those which will follow." At other times he would say: "You are a dear little chatterbox. Is it not lucky that I am such a good listener!"

I sometimes wished that we might unfold our tents and remain here, but Allan's leave was drawing to an end. I was nearer to being happy than I ever have been in my life. Once in an hour of closest intimacy I told him of the strange foreboding of misfortune which had darkened my happiest days from earliest childhood, of that subconsciousness of coming sorrow which was to haunt me all through life.

"You will understand me better than I do myself, for you are Scotch and have second sight."

But he only laughed at my fears, called them superstitions, and me a "little goose"; then took me in his arms saying:

"Do not trouble about the future. With me beside you life will ever flow peacefully and happily. It will only grow more so every day."

I have often wondered why people spend the first weeks of their married life in travelling, instead of settling down at once. Our itinerary was Nice, Genoa, Florence, Rome, and Naples—then Brindisi, the steamer, and India. I longed to see my new home. Now that we were husband and wife the bird of passage was no longer interested in new sights. There was only one place I would have wished to go. It was Scotland—to show Allan to his people now that he was my own. The

gods were kind indeed that they did not grant this wish!

Your father used to lavish the most exquisite gifts upon me whilst in Italy. He always bought two things almost identical. At first I thought they were both for me, then he would say: "How do you think Polly would like this?" I did not grudge her the gift, but at times I felt like a second wife who enters her new home as a bride, and sees the picture of the woman who reigned there before her.

Your aunt's love of correspondence was intense; her letters came pouring in constantly. They were volumes of advice and religious talk. Later on I understood this to be cant, though I did not know the word at the time; but Allan attributed it to her kind solicitude for our welfare. To me she wrote: "I hear that you love Ouida. My brother cannot guide you in the matter, as he never reads novels, and your knowledge of English is yet too imperfect for you to understand the meaning she often conveys. So let me tell you that her books are not proper reading." How your Aunt Polly knew that Ouida was improper for me, I have never fathomed.

"Never mind what they say," was Allan's comment to their letters. "They do not see things as they really are, and cannot understand them."

I liked to measure my strength with theirs. They were absent and I present, so I had an unfair advantage; but I remember with delight that I always carried the day. One afternoon in Rome, a letter from one of the many acquaintances I had made in Scotland, where people had been very kind to me, told me that Polly was greatly troubled because her brother was led by me in everything.

"Is it really true?" I asked delighted.

Allan laughed and changed the subject, but later on when we were walking on the Corso, amidst crowds of people, I suddenly stopped.

"Give me a kiss," I said.

"Surely not here," he replied; "that would never do. What would people say?"

"Never mind, they will not trouble about us. You have to be guided by me," and so saying, I sat down in the snow, and would not move until he lifted me up and kissed me on both cheeks.

These were the childish things which filled our happy days. Remember, little daughter, I was only a child myself. It was foolish, as it now seems to me, but in those days I was so proud to use even such small artifices to bring him close to me.

VIII

WE landed early on a March morning. Everything was already bathed in a sea of glaring light, and the heat, owing to its great dampness, was almost overpowering. Something indescribable, a fatty and sugary smell, and with it an odour as of heavy spices, floated in the air. Deafening noises were to be heard everywhere, and I wondered if these people could perhaps not hear, else why these constant piercing shrieks and yells? I was even more surprised to notice that when the uproar overstepped all bounds, a wave of the hand, the lifting of a stick or the mere *chuprao* of a European, subdued all these ragged, aggressive men.

The carriage took us from the docks to our home on the hill, through a part of the native town. Your father had lived in his bungalow for many years before he married. I was burning with impatience to see it, but on our way we stopped at a large Mussulman furniture shop. There I had to try dozens of armchairs to choose the most comfortable, whilst all the time I was devoured with the longing to be off. Any seat I thought would do for me.

It has always been thus, I have had only one aim in view, sacrificing everything else to it. Trifles have had little import for me. I did not understand early enough, that life mostly consists of small things. I have not known how to act or talk lightly, to indulge in silly amusements, to spend idly or unprofitably the long days of our short life. It is a pity for a woman not to be able to do these things. I believe this has been the chief reason why all through life I have been solitary.

We had fruit on the veranda as soon as we arrived.

"I am so sorry they could get no peaches for you," said your father to me. "I sent them the order."

"Apricots," I said, feeling all the time uneasy at the smell of the guavas on one of the fruit dishes.

A few months after our arrival a great sorrow overshadowed our happiness. A little daughter came and went away, even before we had time to call her ours. Amidst all the anguish of mind and body, I remember Allan coming in the grey morning dawn when all was over. He took me in his arms, put his dear head upon my breast, and whispered to me:

"It was a wee lassie. She is gone, but you are left."

All the rest has grown dim. I was not even able to grieve much for her at the time, for I was very ill. I have often asked myself during the long years which

are drawing to a close, if she who never lay in my arms, whose face I never beheld, if your sister, my first-born, would have come to her mother to love her, when all had gone. . . .

The children of love resemble the father. You all were his, not mine. There are women who require children to make their happiness perfect; there are others whose eager desire yearns only for one man's love. I am one of these. There was no place for children in my life, though I bore you proudly, and adored you when you came. But I never longed for a child as some women do. My love for your father left no room for anything else. It filled heart, soul, and mind, as sweet wine fills the body. Still, when your baby sister had gone, the long Indian days seemed longer than when I was waiting for her.

All was happiness when Allan was with me, but he generally left me in the morning, and only came back late in the afternoon. My life had been simple but full of activity. By nature I am restless, and I grew sick of the idleness of my life and its luxury. I would have loved to do things for Allan, even darn his socks, but his bearer would have been offended. I had nothing to occupy me, and felt so unimportant, I, who had always been the centre of everything. Sometimes the solitude of the large bungalow grew intolerable, and I walked about like a lion in a cage. I had not yet learnt to love my own company—the lesson has cost me much to acquire!

IX

PEOPLE are like nations, the happy ones have no history, and for years your father and I only enjoyed life. There was no chafing between us as to details, which so often prove fatal to love. Allan was easy-going, took things as they came, and having instituted me "mistress of all he possessed," as he often laughingly said, allowed me to do things just as I pleased. In those days I did not realise that this was a favour bestowed by an autocrat. I was so completely swayed by him, the elder and the wiser, that I loved him all the more because, as he explained, privileges and rights came to me through him. Thus a Sultana must feel who sees herself suddenly lifted out of the retirement of the harem to a glory she never dreamt of. Without asking how and why all these good things have come to her, she enjoys the present and believes that it will continue for ever. So did I. The moment was there which Faust desired when he said: "*Werd' ich zum Augenblicke sagen: Verweile doch, Du bist so schön*"; but for me life was not to end. Days and nights were to be followed by others, each happier than the last.

There was sometimes a black Monday though, when the mail came, bringing letters from Scotland. Your father had discovered, to his great surprise and mine, that I was a born cook. It seemed to me a slight accomplishment, but he had told his father about it. There resulted between your grandfather and me a long written

conversation on the art of the cuisine, and he sent me some French cookery books—one I still use. His letters were frankly admiring, and I delighted to receive them.

It was not the same with those of Polly, which generally threw a shadow over my joy. She always gave advice on things she knew nothing about; in fact she seemed to choose subjects about which she must have been ignorant. How could she have known, an old maid of fifty, what should be the attitude of a young wife towards her husband, and later, a young mother to her children? She used to tell Allan, and indirectly me, of course, how his mother had been in the habit of doing things, how he had liked them in former years. I did not care for this, but did not trouble much; though I wondered at times that he received her advice so patiently.

Eighteen months after our arrival we left the bungalow on the hill and went to live in the house close to the sea, where you spent with me your early years—where we parted, child.

We were scarcely settled when your brother was born. Your father had longed for a son and was overjoyed. It was the one thing which had been wanting to make his happiness perfect. The servants were waiting outside in the veranda when he took the child and put him into the arms of his own body-servant, who had been with him for sixteen years. "I give you the little sahib to take care of," he said. How wonderfully like me Allan had grown, for in the great joys of my life I would have wished to animate the stones, that they might share my delight.

I had not intended nursing my child, it is not the custom in my country. A European soldier's wife had been engaged as foster-mother. But when they put the

little form into my arms, the mother in me awoke, and I fed him at my breast. I felt no thrill of delight as I had expected. I remember well that I could not bear to hear him scream, and that my treasure had to spend the first night of his life with his nurse in the drawing-room, instead of in his bedroom, which I had planned to have as near to mine as possible.

Allan and I were very happy to have a son, but we were so wholly engaged in one another that we did not want another child.

Your second brother was born seventeen months later. From the very first I knew that it was to be another boy—a man-child to struggle with life and vanquish, not a woman to suffer, and this thought sustained me all through the weary time of waiting. Your father was prevented from being beside me in the dark hours. When the fair-haired little son lay in my arms, he arrived.

The following June we set out for Europe. We had hoped to escape the monsoon, but we encountered it in full. The boat was sixteen days getting to Aden.

On this terrible voyage the first-class passengers spent day and night in the saloon on mattresses which had been brought from the cabins. The heat was stifling—more than one hundred degrees in the shade—the hatches and portholes had been battened; our cabins, which we only entered to change, were dark. We were very busy, Allan and I, for the baby boys were our constant care. Our native servants, bearers and ayahs, lay down to die—so they assured us, though they were all right afterwards—and your father had to look after them also.

When the day was over, we lay down, thinking, amidst the howling of the wind and the thunder of the waves,

that this night might be our last. Some of us perhaps wished it, for the effort to live was almost unbearable. In the worst nights I was happy to feel my treasures close to me, your little brothers at my feet, your father's mattress in the same row, his head against mine. Often amidst the awful noise, when the end of everything seemed close, I would throw back my hand, touch his dear head and say to him: "Never mind, at least we shall go down together." The wings of death almost touched us, but he would not have taken us unawares, nor found us wanting in courage. I like to remember those days, child.

Calmer seas came at last, but the voyage was adventurous all through. Alexandria was in flames when we passed, and our boat was stormed by the fugitives. In London we spent some delightful hours with your dear Uncle Hal, and our dinner at the Criterion is one of the pleasant memories of my life. I was beginning to dread the meeting with your father's people. All the same I hoped that they would love me, and judge indulgently the difference of temperament. I had always met with so much kindness in life before, and now, eager to become "one of them," I was bringing with me Allan and the two little sons.

I have no doubt that things would have been all right but for Polly. Now that I was married, your grandfather drew even closer to me; he would often take me to his room and tell me about his dead wife. Sometimes he would take from his cupboard a relic of the past, a shawl she had worn, a shoe which had encased her slender foot, her bonnet—and as nothing interests lovers so much as love, I could have listened to him for days. Allan's other sisters seemed to like me—but there was Polly.

In after years I often asked myself why, from the very first, she thus set herself against my happiness. There had been the beginning of an idyll for her also, but life had shattered it ruthlessly. I felt sorry when I first knew about it; now I understand that it made her bitter about the happiness of others, and that she was jealous of mine. She certainly did everything to make me unhappy. Not that she was unkind in acts, or that her words were reprehensible. No; it was a gentle, hostile attitude, which worked by insinuations too slight to be resented, and often enveloped in the travesty of religion.

I never complained to Allan, for there was really nothing to tell. There were no altercations between us, and it would have been difficult for me to reproach her with anything. I fought vainly against my unhappiness. I felt that hostile influences were floating in the air, but they were unreal, phantom like; my disappointment only was real. Polly strove to make me understand that, as her brother's wife, I had to give up my individuality. She never looked upon him as my husband, only upon me as his wife. He was her brother, and the children were his. They came of the same stock. Scotland and Scotch ways were the only fit setting for all of them.

I am a cosmopolitan; moreover, to my mind, untutored in English politics, England, Ireland, and Scotland seemed to form one whole. I was not able to enter into the Scotch race-hatred against England. Alas! Alas! I did not see those things as I see them to-day, nor did I understand their weight. All I knew was that Allan was being carried away from me by a contrary current, and that my children were no longer my own.

Sometimes Polly would get me alone and try to convert me—to what faith I have often wondered? It makes me sick at heart when I think that you have been brought up in her loveless creed.

X

“Clear, placid Leman! thy contrasted lake
With the wild world I dwelt in, is a thing
Which warns me, with its stillness, to forsake
Earth’s troubled waters for a purer spring.”

Love’s eyes are ever keen, and your father missed my laughter. We would go to Switzerland, he said, so that I might be happy and bright again. On our journey we stopped a few days in Paris, only a few, for Allan was lonely; he spoke no French, and never would study it, though he always hoped that, since we were married, it would come to him quite naturally.

To facilitate matters, especially to please Polly, your elder brother had been left behind. Your grandfather and she were to pay us a visit later on and bring him. But for this invitation, I do not think she would have let Allan go, and I was ready to sacrifice anything, if only she would give him up.

We took one of the villas built where the Bosquet de Julie had been.

The woman who took you from me cannot have left much of me in you; she put another heart in the stead of the loving, loyal one which belonged to my child. She will have taught you her narrow views. I remem-

ber that she hated Byron, though she had never read him. As to Rousseau, most likely she does not know his name. I enjoyed talking to your father of these things, but even there, on the very spot, he could not understand that I was interested in them. For the first time perhaps I began to fathom the alienating force of difference of surroundings and nationality.

I had been taught to love all things beautiful and great, and suddenly I felt alone.

Anglo-Indians' visits to Europe are seldom an unalloyed pleasure. They have lost touch with their former associations, and everything has to be taken up afresh. Material life for the English runs smoothly in the East, whilst during their short stays in the West difficulties seem to crop up everywhere.

I had too little time for your father, as he often complained; my duties were now divided, and from the very first I was kept busy. There was the villa to be looked after and the servants; the little son required me constantly. I was not free to go about with Allan as I would have loved to do, and be his constant companion as in the days when the world only consisted of us two. It was not that my heart was divided. Here he reigned supreme as of old, but this very fact made me perhaps more anxious to fulfil my duties conscientiously towards my little sons.

After a month your grandfather and Polly arrived, bringing with them Montfort. They had often found fault with the way I brought up my children. It is true that I am a lover of discipline, exacting as regards others, but even more strict towards myself. I brought you up as my mother did me. Her firm training has stood me in good stead all through life; without it the waves of adversity would have overwhelmed me. It was

but natural that I should follow her precepts with my own children.

Polly had done much work in the short space of one month, and had so utterly spoilt our little boy that she had made his life a burden to himself and to others. Whilst with us, she insisted that he should still be her charge, infringing upon all my rights and thwarting all my careful training. She would sometimes spend half a day making him do "by gentle persuasion" the most natural, everyday things which he was accustomed to do in obedience to a word or a look of mine. She was my guest and I had to accept things.

A thunderstorm suddenly cleared the sky. It was the time of Sarah Bernhardt's appearance in London, and the English papers brought us daily tidings of her success. She was appearing in plays which I knew almost by heart, and I followed her triumph eagerly, feeling very proud of London's ovation to my countrywoman. I do not remember how the discussion began. Unknowingly to me perhaps, my enthusiasm may have passed the bounds and opened the floodgates of their wrath. All I know is that both your grandfather and your Aunt Polly said the most cruel and uncalled-for things, not only about her, but about Frenchwomen in general. I do not think that Sarah would have minded much, but I did. Their harangue was a strange mixture—religion, politics, education, nationality, in all their kaleidoscopic aspects, woven together with crassest ignorance and prejudice. It was as if an abyss had suddenly opened before me, and there was no hand stretched out towards me.

Many years have gone, child, but never shall I forget my dismay when I saw Allan silently acquiescing in all their base and untrue remarks. I hate injustice, and am

ever ready to defend truth at any cost; but surprise and grief held me speechless.

"But I am a Frenchwoman," I exclaimed at last.

"You are his wife, and you are now Scotch," said Polly, and the old man nodded approvingly as if he had learnt a lesson.

Can you understand my folly? the saddest thing was that I believed them—not the unjust accusations, but that I myself had changed nationality and no longer belonged to my own people. I could only defend them as an outsider. What Polly and her father said, after all, mattered little. I could not understand them, how could they understand us, for one human being can never put himself in the place of another. Good breeding might have made them refrain from exhibiting their views, but all this seemed secondary. Of real importance was what your father thought. He did not speak, but I felt that he was with them.

"My wife knows that she is Scotch," was all he said, and I suddenly remembered that the day before our marriage he had exulted over my change of nationality. I had not understood the bitterness of heart against my people which this implied. I have never solved the problem why some nations hate one another so bitterly, but I believe that these prejudices have at their base the hatred of the Puritan for less stern creeds and his envy of the happiness of others.

Not satisfied with her victory, Polly took your grandfather for a long walk on the following day. When they came back he called me to him and said that he wished me to be guided by him in the upbringing of my children—my two dear little sons! I was an ardent, impetuous woman, I have been so all through life, but ever respectful, even deferential to old age. I listened

calmly; he was my guest, my husband was his son; but they were my children, and I felt that he was only the voice of Polly. I made no reference to the evening before, but I told him that those children were mine, that my husband trusted me, and that no one should ever interfere—not even he.

He was very surprised, for I had always been submissive before. They left the following day, and I felt that Allan and my children were once again mine.

XI

SOMETIMES, little daughter, whilst gathering the leaves of my life and tying them together for you to read, I stop and think of you. It is a woman's refuge to have a good cry at these moments, but this consolation has ever been denied to me. The din and turmoil of the world, the fight for everyday existence, have been my only stand-by—and deep, deep down the unaltering purpose that one day you should know the truth.

Regrets are worse than futile; doubts are even worse; but I now doubt if I was right to leave you in the hands of that woman. I should have gone and stood at her gate and watched for you, day and night; but I do so shrink from everything vulgar and unbecoming, and in that little square where the baker boy, the butcher, and the milkman pass, I know I could not have been standing, waiting for a look, for a word from my child. With a gentle word and a smile and a slight touch, your Aunt Polly would not hesitate to push a poor sinner into

eternal damnation. She would not have been violent. It is not that I ever feared; but she would have had me thrust out by force, as an intruder.

No one of us knows what he can do in desperate moments, but even had I found the courage to face this ordeal, I know I should have run away had you stood coldly beside her. Of what avail to wait outside, if you had passed me as a stranger and looked the other way? An Emperor once stood three days and nights barefoot in snow and ice in the courtyard of Canossa; but he knew that, beside his enemy, a woman's heart was beating which pleaded for the stranger at the gate, and that at last he would be received.

Had the faintest hope ever inspired me, I would have been a giant in endurance and strength. But why look back, child, when the present is still so full of you, when it cries to my heart: "She and you are both alive, can you do nothing for her? Not even one of the thousand everyday things which a mother does for the child she loves?" And the dull voice of anguish replies: "No, yours is no longer the privilege of troubling about small things for her."

When the rain is falling fast on a winter night, I wonder if you are still in cold, bleak Scotland, or if you are living in warmer climes; if the horizon of your life is limited by your surroundings, or if you have left old associations for ever with the man whom you love and who loves you? Have you taken love seriously, or only to fill the emptiness of your existence?

I have never been able to think of you as a happy child. Sometimes in my dreams you have come and lain at my side, with your large brown eyes looking tenderly, wistfully at me; but they no longer shone with the bright light of the days when we were together.

Even in my dream I felt you were not happy, and that somewhere, far under the bonds which narrowness of mind and prejudice had forged round you, there was still the heart of my own little Reine. Later on, I never could think of you as a happy girl, and often wished that Polly had sent you to school, so that you might have companions.

XII

Among the many illusive things which I have known, our stay at Clarens, in the enchanted site of my girlhood, has perhaps been the greatest disillusion of all. I felt happy when the time of our return was approaching.

Looking back upon my life, it now seems to me to have been one long journey. I have crossed the Indian Ocean twenty-eight times, visited all the countries of Europe and every continent—in search of what, I ask myself. It is only now that I begin to understand what a mad and devouring thing it is to scatter oneself through the world, to become acclimatised everywhere, to live five or six separate existences instead of one single, placid, commonplace one. It was a bad thing in my life, this constant going to and fro. As the years went on, I grew more and more detached from things; I did not feel the least pang at parting from places which once had been dear to me. After Clarens, I never again felt joy at revisiting them. I sometimes think now that all places in the world were indifferent to me, all except one, and this was India, which had the nearest feeling to home

which the bird of passage has ever known. I have loved India; to me it has been a home "as happy as mine had a chance to be."

We embarked at Genoa in the early Italian spring. It did not matter to me that we were returning at the worst possible time, so long as we were returning.

I was charmed to be at home again, but my joy was to be of short duration. India, "the great Mother," is not kind to European children, and I saw my two beautiful, bright-eyed little sons grow day by day paler and more listless. So we decided to take a house in Dula, a fashionable health-resort, recalling England with its green swards and cool breezes.

Allan soon left me comfortably ensconced amid my household gods, but very sad, for though I expected he would spend every week-end with me, I dreaded the separation. However, important work took him away and I did not see him again for almost six months. It was our first real separation and it seemed as if death had entered my home. Had I been alone, he would have taken me with him, knowing how much I dreaded solitude. We often had planned it so; but there were the children. His first letter brought me the evil tidings; it was full of tender care for me and kind inquiries after the little sons. They would comfort me, he said, for he knew that I would suffer. For me one thing never has replaced another; but are all men ignorant of the fact that for a whole-souled woman who loves, the children can never replace the husband?

He sent me a horse at the same time "to comfort me for my disappointment"—to me who had only one longing, to leave Dula, even the children, and rejoin him.

Allan came up for the last ball of the season, and

together we returned home. It was then that for the first time I began to fear that, never needing me much at the best of times, the separation had taught him to do without me; but he would not hear of it, laughed my fears away, and soon I forgot them.

I have always had, even now possess, a keen sense of enjoyment in the fact that I am alive. Judge what this *joie de vivre* must have been in the days of my happiness. It was good to see every morning the new dawn. Still, amidst my exuberance and the delight at being once again beside Allan, the old melancholy sometimes came back stronger than ever, though I always struggled against it.

I had learnt many things since my marriage, among others to hide deep down in my heart this fear of coming evil. On the rare occasions when I spoke of it to Allan, he was annoyed at my "lack of trust," though he must have known that I never doubted him. It was difficult for me to explain these things to him, for I was still very untrained, almost unfinished, a mere girl—though the mother of two sons—or rather a child at heart. I trust that your character has this child-side, Reine. It lives in every true woman and only dies with her.

During my first years in India as your father's wife, it took me all my time and will-power to adapt myself to my new surroundings. Allan did not care about book-knowledge, so I put it aside as useless. He was not interested in literature, so I no longer troubled about it, and things are easily forgotten. My love for your father absorbed me entirely; I had "none other god beside him." He filled my whole life, I wished for nothing but him, I only lived for the moment and was perfectly happy.

The four years of our marriage seemed to have been

filled with moving to and fro, and with the care for the little sons before and after their coming.

On my return home this time I felt as if a new lease of life had been given to me, and as if I should enjoy myself as never yet before. It was then that Allan first wondered at my being "so restless," for I was eager to do and see everything, whilst he often seemed weary and too tired for any effort. I still had the power, however, to await his curiosity, and he would often accompany me, always saying: "It is only for you I care, not for these things—I know them all."

I was "indefatigable," as your father would say, in those far-off days. It is true that I never knew what it was to feel tired, never once. At five o'clock in the afternoon I would generally meet Allan at his office; together we would loiter at one of the fashionable meeting-places, or oftener still ransack the native shops in the bazaar for curios. Sometimes, when we had finished dinner, I would say to him on a moonlight night:

"It is far too beautiful to remain in. I must have a ride, will you come with me?"

Allan was seldom inclined to give me his dear company, so I would go alone, or sometimes accompanied by one of our guests, for during the season we never dined *tête-à-tête*. Even if my ride was solitary, I did not feel lonely, for my horse and I were great friends, and I delighted in a ride in the Indian moonshine, which is even brighter than the glorious nights of the North.

The deserted path ran alongside the village for a few yards, then, under the shadow of the palms, I faced the sea. Now when I remember for your sake, I would like to linger and tell you the thousand impressions which my eager soul drank in.

The sky above me lay like a mass of molten silver, and

beneath it the Indian Ocean in all its quiet grandeur. I was absolutely alone; the lights in the distant mud huts had gone out, not a sound came to me but the rustling of the palms when the wind passed through them. Sometimes I would hear a faint noise as of the throwing of small light boards and would meet belated wanderers carrying a load. They were poor Hindus with their dead, who used the sands as a burning ghat. As a rule in a few hours every vestige was washed away by the sea, leaving seldom even a streak of ashes; but in the early morning, when the tide was low, my horse's hoof would stumble against a skull left from the night before.

The tide permitting, I would gallop for miles. As a rule I enjoyed these outings thoroughly, but sometimes I would feel bitter that Allan left me so much alone, and that he did not mind others accompanying me. There were many eager to come, and, as time went on, my solitary rides grew less frequent, and the days came when I tried to gather the pleasure of the fleeting hour in the company of others, but almost to the last it only sharpened the regret that it was not my Allan who was beside me.

XIII

CHILD, you have been the one memory left to cherish, "*le seul coin pur et bleu de tout mon horizon.*" Yet it was your coming which struck the first blow to our love.

The monsoon was unusually late that year, and the heat in the plains terrific, so I prevailed upon Allan to

come up to the hills. We spent a fortnight together which is marked with big red letters in my life, for it was a succession of super-days, of which even the happiest life can contain but a limited number. Those gift-days of the gods only came to us on holidays, when we were our two selves and Allan once again all my own. At last we had to think of moving on to Dula, for heavy mists were driving up the valleys, and the rains becoming more threatening every day.

We drove down the ghats, putting up at the Dak Bungalow in a small village half-way down, so as to visit some famous Jain temples. Allan wondered at my wish to see them, for he was ever unchallenged by the mysteries which surround every step in India, whilst I eagerly turned to each passing thought or fancy.

Your father was to leave us at Dula on the anniversary of our meeting on the steamer. Six years had gone since that summer day; but they had only added intensity to the fire of my love and made it burn stronger in my soul than in those girlish days. It seemed impossible to let him go and leave me behind. He felt it also.

"The little ones are well looked after," he said, "come down with me. It will be just like olden times. We thought we wanted children; but we should have been much freer without them."

So I went back home with him. All kinds of pleasures are crowded into the last days before the torrential rains cut amusements short. On our return the vortex seized us.

We were seated in the brougham driving back from a dinner, where an English lamb had been killed in our honour. It was very airless. Even under the punkahs on the veranda where we had dined, owing to the great

heat, there had scarcely been a breath. It had not affected me, I had been in my maddest, merriest mood, and kept them all entertained. At intervals ominous big drops of rain had fallen, and at last we hurried off, for electricity filled the air and a distant thundering was sometimes heard.

In India the monsoon is an event above all others. The "break" is certainly one of the grandest manifestations of the forces of nature, and a beautiful sight for those who do not fear thunderstorms. As for me, I dreaded them more than I can tell you, just as much as you did, little daughter. To-day I do not notice them. Would you ever overcome the dread, I used to ask myself when I saw you trembling and shivering.

We were alone, his dear hand resting in mine.

"I am so proud of you, Eleonore. You have been gay to-night and you know that is how I love you. It was a good thing you came down. This is just as I have always wanted it. The children are getting big, they are well taken care of, and you should be beside me. I shall keep you, darling one; you cannot go back until the monsoon has broken."

He smiled at me and I was happy, and, as so often before, the thought came that some day perhaps we might be less well off, and he need me more. . . .

The slight rain had stopped, and the atmosphere felt like lead; but my heart was light, and hope towered far above any sorrow the years might bring.

When we reached the bungalow, Nature seemed on fire, horses and men were gasping. There was only one desire—that the monsoon would break. The *Sadhu* of the adjoining temple had called to see me, and said that the rains would come to-night; this was the news with which the servants welcomed us. Allan and I decided

to leave our bedrooms on the ground floor, and pass the night in a kind of glass-house over the porch.

The large bed occupied almost the whole room. It was one kept for such occasions, made all of windows, which stood wide open on that sultry night.

"I hope for your sake the rain will soon come, little one. It seems almost wrong that I allowed you to come down," Allan said, just before bidding me good night. Even in those days he still looked upon me as a child. This annoyed Polly greatly, and she had told him so in a letter. We laughed over it, and I said she was right.

He stretched out his dear hand, and gave me a light pat, as one does to a child before it goes to sleep. It was often his good-night greeting, and felt like a blessing, for it took me back to those terrible nights on board the steamer when, amidst the roaring of the sea, the touch of his hand had been my anchor. He never minded the heat much, and was soon asleep.

I could not rest. A fear had taken hold of me. Off and on it had been with me for the last few days; it seemed distant, undefined, like the rumbling of the thunder which had again begun. It suddenly gripped my heart and I knew that it was real. I could not bear it alone. Allan must know at once, he must share the burden. He would be sympathetic, tender—and I was in such terrible need of love.

A great streak of lightning rent the sky asunder and made the dark night around me seem daylight, unnerving me more than ever. It was impossible that he should be asleep and I suffering so much, so I turned towards him and lightly touched his face.

"Allan, wake up and comfort me. I need you. I believe another child is coming. And we were to be so

happy our two selves, now that the little sons are no longer babies."

Your father sat up.

"What is it?" he asked. "I do not believe it."

I repeated what I had said, clasping my arms round him. At the same moment there was a tremendous crash, as if the bungalow would be uprooted, and the porch shook. Around us was the howling and roaring of the wind, the rain swept through the room—the monsoon had arrived in full force.

I came closer to him.

"Allan, take me in your arms. Let us go downstairs together, we shall die here. I am so afraid. Why do you not speak to me when I am so unhappy?"

One great flash of lightning showed me his face. It was cold and hard, and he pushed me aside as if he did not wish me to come near him. Why repeat the words which followed? They were bitter and cruel, and killed in me the hope that he would show me sympathy and tenderness.

I did not understand his anger at once. The truth only gradually dawned upon me, and when I understood, despair filled my heart. Anything he might say afterwards I knew would be of no avail. My hungry soul had asked for the bread of life—a stone had been given to me.

I got up quietly and went down to my room, where I lay on my bed amid the thunder and lightning with the rain driving in. I no longer minded. I would not have feared if a fire from heaven had surrounded me, for my soul was sick to death.

Such was your welcome, child!

XIV

THOSE who have the courage to face life's problems, solve them. All through the long night I was at war with myself. I had not wanted you, little daughter; but when the morning came, I knew that I would welcome you with my full heart.

When my soul is wounded, I envy the beasts of the forest their lair. I felt I must be alone. I told Allan in the morning that I wished to go to Europe with the little sons. He spoke of his people, who would be kind to me and surround me with every attention. My plans were uncertain, but he made no objection. Thus we set off, the children and I, in the teeth of the monsoon.

The weather was rough, but we passed Aden and went through the Red Sea without any difficulty. It was in the Mediterranean that the high seas met us. Not only the cabins, but the whole deck was battened down, and the water had to be pumped out of the hold and lower deck. The native servants were again useless, and Louise, my devoted French maid, looked after the little sons. As soon as the rough weather set in in real earnest, I ordered my mattress to be taken up to the music-saloon—the highest and driest part of the ship.

The other passengers would go to and fro past me, but I took no heed of them, and lay oblivious of everything. The dear little boys, whom Louise sometimes brought to me, were the only sunbeams. They would kneel down, one on each side, the brown head and the fair one—I

still see them—softly caressing me with their little hands. Then, stooping down, they would give me a light kiss. They seemed to wonder why their mother had grown so quiet and no longer laughed and romped with them. Louise had told them not to worry me; but sometimes they would gently ask if I would soon be well again.

To prevent the passengers from speaking to me, I had asked the doctor to tell them that I must not be disturbed. Two old Scotch ladies would, however, constantly come and offer to read the Bible to me. I had politely, and, as I thought, firmly declined, but my Scotch name was their excuse, and my "lonely position" as they told me. So they always returned to the charge, trying to convert me.

Life on board ship brings with it great intimacy; acquaintances, even friendships, are formed in a few hours. I believed I had the talent of keeping people at arm's length; but I utterly failed with those two dear old ladies. It was Louise who saved me. She told their maid that I was not of her ladies' religion.

"Of what denomination is your lady?" the Scotch abigail asked the French.

"Of none at all, she only believes in deeds," was the reply.

After this they left me alone.

The tempest was raging wilder than ever. The waves were house-high, and amidst the uproar I heard the men shouting and running to and fro on the deck, as I lay alone in the large music-room. I got up and tried to look out, but the last way on to the deck had been closed, and below all was dark and still, so I went back. A wilder noise than before startled me, then the engines stopped.

I heard a bell, people came hurrying up the stairs, and

the room was suddenly crowded. When Louise brought me the two dear little ones, she told me that the danger signals were up, and rockets were being fired. Every passenger was given a life-belt, for the boats had been washed away.

We were seated on the low settee which ran along the side of the music-room. At my feet your little brothers were lying fast asleep in each other's arms. I was very calm, and Louise had modelled herself too closely upon me to be anything else; but there was much "weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth" all around us. The two old Scottish maids, suddenly roused from their sleep, appeared in large frilled night-caps. It seemed such strange attire to be drowned in. They were kneeling next to me, their heads upon the couch, praying, as I thought, but sobbing and weeping loudly at the same time. I wished to comfort them, but they looked as if they did not understand me, horror and fright written on every line of their faces.

Suddenly all grew quiet, and the Captain appeared in his gala uniform. After all these years it will not sound like boasting, and I like to tell you, little girl, that he paused a moment as he passed me, and said:

"It is you who are showing us courage."

Then he went on.

The Lascars spread out the flags and the Captain began to read "the Prayers used at sea," one of the officers making the responses and the passengers joining in. I had taken the baby boys on my knee, and felt strangely comforted by the beautiful words. It was the most impressive ceremony I have ever witnessed, with life and death in the balance, and outside the roaring of the sea, which at any moment might claim us. Beside me the two old ladies were still sobbing; but a great

peace had entered my heart. It was sweet to feel the two little darlings pressed to my heart. They were the one tangible thing left of the dear past which had tied me so closely to your father, they were his, mine—ours.

Suddenly all the bitterness of heart was forgotten, wiped away as if by a wonder. Love sprang up again renewed, and stronger for all I had suffered. We could not thus part, we two, with bitter words still between us. Love like ours could not end. We would be again as gods together, loving one another and vanquishing the world.

I got up, and with your little brothers in my arms, knelt down and sent to God my cry of supplication. I do not remember what followed, but while we were waiting for death and praying for life, the sea grew calm.

XV

THE wind has been sobbing all day, as if Nature wished to tell me that I am not alone in my sorrow while I sit here evoking the past.

All that touches you, child, seems as if it had only happened yesterday, for the years have been wrought with thoughts of you. Sometimes I tell myself, to deaden the pain—the human heart is made thus, and turns to illusions for comfort—that the dear little girl is not lost to me, since she lives in my heart, as in the days of her graceful childhood. But the longing for you is stronger than all the brain's cleverly worked fancies, and my heart cries for you incessantly!

Until we parted that time, Allan and I, scarcely more than a momentary shadow had been thrown on our love; now sorrow entered our lives. In that solitary night when I fought with myself, the deep meaning of life was made clear to me for the first time, that it is a battle without truce or quarter, not merely with the outer forces, but also with our inner self.

I am not a musician, as you know, but in the grip of anguish, the great master's words come back to me: "Take Fate by the throat and overcome it." Thus I would do with my sorrow and bravely accomplish "*le triste et le beau métier de vivre.*"

When I had vanquished the pain of being separated from Allan, I was surprised that I bore my load of sadness so much more easily than I had expected, and I knew that my thought had turned towards you, and that you had become part of my life.

I felt so lonely that my feet took me willingly to Scotland. I firmly believed that things would be quite different this time from what they had ever been.

After our trying voyage, we were all glad to land. Your Uncle Hal was waiting for us. He lived at that time in Croydon, as a bachelor, so we thought. Almost his first words were that he wished me to explain something to Allan for him. He had sadly changed, and I looked in vain for the gay companion of four years ago. He spoke of Scotland, saying he had not seen his people for ten years, except that Polly paid him a visit at times. He looked strangely harassed and absent-minded, but hearing that I was bound for the north, no longer seemed inclined to confide in me. I never saw him again, nor did he write, and it was only much later that I learnt what was troubling him. Some day I must tell you about that. A great injustice was done.

The morning was drizzly and bleak when we reached Scotland. At once the cold, cheerless atmosphere penetrated me, and I felt friendless and unsheltered.

To make matters worse, there seemed no way of escape. Allan's letters were there, telling me I had better spend the winter with his people. Nothing could be so good for me as this "bracing climate." He had written to Polly (and she took good care to impress me with the importance of her brother's decision), that he had put me in her charge. She proposed that I should board with them. It seemed as if this were your father's wish, and not knowing where else to go under the circumstances, I acquiesced in her plans. A small incident changed the tide of events.

You remember how devoted Louise was to me. She soon realised that I was happier if Polly were kept in a good temper; so she patiently submitted to the attempts to convert her. At last one Sunday your aunt invited her to go to church—but in half an hour Louise was back, very excited and really hurt.

As soon as the two left the house, Polly had darted forward, Louise at full speed after her, wondering at this undignified haste, but putting it down to Scotch ways. Your aunt, in her effort to keep ahead of Louise, whom she expected to walk behind her, continued to cross the road time after time. When they reached the church, no doubt both of them breathless, Polly said:

"You sit in the seat behind me."

Louise had been accustomed to be considered by myself and your father as a trusted friend. I was indignant at this treatment of her. As soon as Polly came home I told her so, and said some bitter things about Christian charity, I am afraid. She grew angry for once and wished me to get rid of Louise.

This seemed the last straw, and throwing every consideration aside, as I have so often done, I freed myself from their clutches and accepted my guardian's invitation to Switzerland.

XVI

"Da hab' ich viel' blasse Leichen
Beschworen mit Wortesmacht;
Die wollen nun nicht mehr weichen
Zurück in die alte Nacht."

SOMETIMES I dream that we meet, you and I, little daughter, by accident. In my heart's innermost recess I have set you so entirely apart from your surroundings, that we never come face to face *there* where you have lived—where you still may be at the present moment. In that stifling atmosphere there would be no joy in the meeting for me. We run across each other in the streets of one of those distant cities where I have been. Oftener still I have you all to myself, in that far Eastern country where last you were with me.

These days of writing to you take me back, as nothing else has ever done, to the months which preceded your birth, when I dreamt of the little daughter who was to come.

It was a great relief to me to leave the uncongenial atmosphere and the incessant prattle. I longed to be alone with you, and was glad of the invitation to Switzerland.

I soon felt that the dear little sons were wearying

Madame, and decided we must look out for a nest of our own. We went to an hotel where I found, strangely enough, that the cost of living was far less than under Polly's protection. Madame was very sorry at our leaving, but, *au fond*, I think she felt relieved.

The months which followed were full of you, child, for I longed for a little daughter. You are my own, like a treasure deep hidden in the bosom of the earth which the treasure-hunter has put away for a time, sure to find it again some day. Thus I shall find you, *ma toute chérie*.

To while away the time, I filled the long days of waiting with making your garments, as I had done for your brothers. Theirs had been trimmed with blue each time, and now it was pink, for a little girl was coming; you, dear one. When I was sewing your brothers' dainty little things, I had been beside your father, and he did not wish me ever to do needlework. "Look at me instead," he used to say. Still he would sometimes take up the miniature garments and ask if it were possible that these "fairy webs" could ever enfold a real live baby. Now I was alone, working my thoughts into every stitch. I wonder if you ever knew how important a personage you were to me, even long before you were really there? I wish you had seen your mother's handiwork!

These baby clothes were sent back to me—I do not know why, since your aunt kept all my jewels. The dear, small things hurt too much even to touch, so I gave the beautiful baby garments I had made for you to the poor amidst whom I live. It was a pain and yet a pleasure to think that the babies who some day may have to walk in rags had worn one of my little queen's robes for their christening.

At times the past grows too vivid, and I despair when I think that during the long years nothing has ever recalled me to you. When I first understood that you had been taken away from me for ever, I longed to bridge over the past with the present. I wrote and sent you gifts. They were only trifles, for I was poor at the time. Those mute messages of love would have touched the heart of most people. They would not have kept from a child her mother's keepsakes, but Polly, not satisfied with having taken everything out of your life which might have kept my memory alive, returned them to me. Thus did the barren woman, after she had taken from me my child—flesh of my flesh.

My mother, among her hallowed treasures, kept my first thimble. There were many things belonging to you which I hoarded at first. I kept your scrapbook. Among the Christmas cards in it were three which Allan had sent me. There were other souvenirs, and each of them held a remembrance. When I looked at them, I felt as if pincers tore away a part of my heart—it always grew again though, with the same capacity for suffering. Only by putting out of my life everything recalling the past have I been able to face it. A certain ascetic tendency of my character has also stood me in good stead, and it has not been as difficult as you might fancy.

At last I destroyed everything, every line of writing, every word. At least I believed I had done so until the other day, when, looking over some old cookery recipes which I had not touched for twenty years or more, a leaflet fell to the ground—and Allan's handwriting stared at me from it, like the ghost of our happy days. It was a recipe for champagne-cup written out at one of our gay *tête-à-tête* suppers.

"Now you can have it made whenever you like, even if I am away," he had said. . . .

There are three treasures I have not had the courage to destroy, a small green plush bag with my initials worked by you, a pink chintz one in which you once kept my letters; and your photograph. They also will have to go, for nothing must remain of me.

Some people do not speak because they have nothing to say, others because they have too much; and the world, which judges by appearances, calls some reserved who do not possess the power of expression, and others shallow, because the wish to say what they feel is greater than their power of concealment. It is the same with feeling. Time does not kill pain. For some callous natures, new impressions take the place of the old ones; others have not the power to feel deeply, and forget. I never forgot. Though life with its incessant duties laid its claims upon me, my sorrow remained with me, awake or asleep, a physical pain, a weight, "*comme un fruit que la femme porte mort et froid dans ses flancs.*"

When I lost your father—years after you were born—my soul was wounded by the loss of all that I held dearest. Misfortune or ruin, persecution, injustice, had no longer the power to touch me, but I did not yet know what it was to lose you, child; for while he and I lived side by side—shadows never to meet again in the flesh—I had you left to love.

Life itself seemed to have come to an end when you went. And yet, after the first stupor, I looked round and met real life for the first time. It called me as never before, and there was something in me which responded to that call. It was this inmost self which gave me the courage to go on. Close to my sorrow there burnt a great flame which transfused my being, telling

me that I was still alive, and had to help those more unfortunate than myself.

At first I wanted to banish every affection out of my existence, but I have become the friend of many, and certainly of all those who needed me. The pain I suffered opened my eyes to the suffering of others, and many have turned to the kithless woman who was able to comfort them.

There come moments in our lives, even for the strongest and best of us, when it seems as if an end had come to everything, and there is no one to turn to. If such ever come to you, remember me, and that when I was alive there was no fire through which I did not go, no sorrow which I did not know, no torment which I did not undergo.

Remember also in the years to come that I told you all this had made my life richer, and that when I went, I did not regret I had lived my life.

XVII

My little men were very happy during the months whilst I was waiting for you. Every afternoon they would creep beside me on the couch, one cuddled on each side, and listen for hours to the fairy stories in which I wove fancies of you. They were passionately fond of me, those dear little sons of mine; just as you were, dear one.

I thought far less of Allan during this separation than ever before, and when my mind turned towards him, it

was no longer with the old yearning. He evidently felt the same, for his letters were short and sometimes abrupt.

The trio spent a happy Christmas together. Louise and I decorated a big tree which stood in the *salon*. Six years before, the guests had sat down here for my wedding breakfast. Your little brothers were enraptured, they had never had a real Noël. Montfort donned for the first time boy's clothes, and was intensely proud of his dark blue jersey-suit; fair-haired Laurent delighted to admire him.

Allan had sent lovely presents addressed to Louise, to surprise me. The gifts were real treasures, but the greatest of all to me was a card of white satin on which a swan swam towards a water-lily on a moonlit lake. On it was written: "Allan to his own Eleonore."

The time of your coming was close and I was happy, but alas! for the terrible distance which lay between your father and me. When his words at Christmas brought him back to me, I had responded with my full heart; but Polly was once again at work, and a month later, crossing mine, there came a cruel, heartless letter from him. It made me very ill, and a fortnight later you were born.

You were a beautiful baby, as dainty and delicate as a fairy, and very healthy; and I, the proudest woman in the world, and the happiest mother of a little daughter.

All that surrounded you was so sweet and tender, that I almost shrink from touching upon the terrible illness which befell you five days after your birth. In the long ago, I would sometimes take you on my knees—I still feel your fair hair against my cheek—and tell you, *ma toute chérie*, that God gave you twice to me. You will have forgotten this; there is no one now to tell you, and I would like you to know.

I was obliged to entrust your brothers during your illness to a Russian lady at Montreaux, who took excellent care of them. When you were out of danger, she sometimes brought them to me. They were very unhappy at seeing me ill. Big, silent tears would fall down Laurent's pink-and-white cheeks. He would sit looking at me with his large grey-green eyes—just like mine—trying to pull himself together, for he knew I disliked him to cry.

"*Petite mère*," he would whisper, "put a little Cologne on your handkerchief, and wipe my poor eyes."

From that time you were a hyper-sensitive child, easily elated, depressed *pour un rien*, and needing all my loving care. Your convalescence was long and tedious. The least noise startled you, and when Montfort and Laurent came back, they were not as happy as before. They had been so much with me since we left India, that they considered "*petite mère*" their special property. Would the little sister who had brought them such lovely toys always lie so quiet and never play with them? Would she always tremble when they forgot and raised their little voices? They were very fond of you, and were always asking me these things. We did all we could, keeping them out of doors almost the whole of the day, but the narrow compass of hotel-life laid great restrictions upon their liveliness.

Polly's letters came, telling me how much happier and freer they would have been in Scotland, and Madame thought so too.

April was unusually warm that year, and you grew very listless.

"She must have a change at once, if you want to keep her, and absolute quietude," said the doctor. "Entrust

your sons to a mother or sister for a time. It will be better for all of you."

Separation seems to me only another kind of death. I strove to curb the natural impulse, for I realised even when a child that "*aimer, n'est pas un jeu, . . . C'est un divin martyre d'aimer jusqu'à la mort.*" I judged it unworthy of me to keep my darlings beside me, when they would be so much better away—at least I believed so then. It was no use consulting Allan, for he called right everything I did for the children. An invigorating climate was necessary for you, and I could only take you home late in the autumn. I should have to decide then what to do with your brothers.

We had never talked about this, Allan and I. Perhaps we both dreaded the thought too much. Montfort would be five years old, and Laurent almost four, and I knew that India is the enemy of children. I could not bear the thought of my bonnie little sons wearing the faded, precocious look of the children of poor Europeans, born and bred in the country. Their father's home seemed to me the only possible place to send my darlings, for I was still French in *les grandes lignes du caractère*. I could not entrust them to strangers. My petty grievances were forgotten in the agony of parting.

Your father would not have minded in the least had I left them in Montreaux, as I at first intended, but those "whom the gods wish to destroy, they first strike with madness," so I decided for Scotland, and Louise took the children.

I lay alone for three days and nights on my bed and would not even see Madame. Then I took up life again and my duties to you, and went to stay with her on my way to Villars.

XVIII

MY darlings took with them their toys, their books, and all the little things which had delighted them and might contribute to their comfort and happiness. I sent a letter to Polly with special directions which I considered essential to my children's well-being. When Louise returned, she told me that from the first moment your aunt had set them aside.

I felt as if I must go at once and fetch them back, but for your sake I no longer had the privilege to follow my heart's impulse. Madame, seeing me so resigned, was pleased that "at last I understood that the present arrangements were for the best." She loved you, *mignonne*, partly because she was so intimately associated with your birth and the dark days which followed, and also because you were such a quiet baby girl. She never understood your merry little brothers and did not see how sad it would have been had they been like you.

I longed intensely for a word of comfort. If I could have heard Allan once say to me: "My poor child," I could have borne it all better.

During the long joyless years there never has been one who has called me thus.

The mountain air gave us a new lease of life. We were both out all day. Deep blue gentians and large white anemones grew in meadows close to shady lakes, still surrounded by snow. I gathered some and sent them to Montfort and Laurent twice or thrice a week.

I made no friends, except an old lady who took me for long walks. Nature alone does not suffice me; to enjoy things I must have people around me, and people I love. You grew every day bigger and stronger, but I was glad when September arrived. When we left the Grand Mûveran I jumped for joy in the carriage. It has always been a pleasure for me to arrive at new places, but I welcomed with greater delight the moment to leave them. I was every day more eager to be back with your father, and looked forward intensely to my reunion with him. He also was waiting impatiently for me. Before starting, however, I had to see my little sons, take them back perhaps for the cold season. From Villars I wrote at great length to Allan about all my plans, into which he entered fully.

"When you go to Scotland, take the little daughter with you," he cabled. "I would like my father and Polly to see her."

We went by way of Paris. Infantile cholera was raging there, and you were taken ill at once. Again, as the doctor said, there was only one thing to do, take you away. I thought of sending Louise to fetch my darlings, but even if I could have spared her, what should I have done with them! Go alone! How could I leave you, when you needed me more than ever?

The thought of you dominated all the rest, and when we left Paris I carried you in my arms to the reserved compartment. The doctor, though unable to do more for you, wished to accompany me; but I felt I was better alone. You might die on the way, he had said. But with that wonderful elasticity which you owe to the French strain in you, inherited from your mother, you got better instead, and when Madame received us the

next morning, she could not believe that you had been so ill.

In the joy of possessing you once again, I am afraid I forgot your brothers a little.

.
On a dazzling November dawn, Allan met me on board the steamer. We had been separated so long that when I saw him come up the gangway, it seemed too good to be true.

"You must look at our little daughter, and admire her," I said when my eyes had taken their fill of him, and we were driving home.

He then glanced at you for the first time and exclaimed: "How very like Madame she is!"

It is a fact that you resembled our dear old friend, perhaps because I was so much with her when you were coming. There was an expression of suffering on your face. Your father noted it.

"That will soon pass away," I said, "for we are now two to love her."

Allan looked at me with that smile which I knew so well, took up my hand and kissed it—his was not a nature to care much about children, nor did he trouble about your little brothers. That they were with Polly and his father sufficed him. But he was very proud of you, darling.

The days which followed were one long rapture. We shall never meet again, he and I who once loved, and even the memory of those days belongs no more to me.

Home was the one thing you needed, and when they had laid you in the cradle in the large, shady nursery where your brothers had slept, my heart went to rest. I

did not forget the darlings. Only the great happiness of the first days of reunion left no place for regrets. I was a child when I first realised that it is impossible to think of two things at the same time, and was very unhappy about it; but my mother told me that some day I should think it a great blessing.

You have been brought up by a woman who knows nothing of real life, whose virtues—if such she possesses—are negations, who looks upon the blind obedience of woman to man as her first duty. She should have lived in the Rome of old, where the wife laid the new-born infant at his father's feet, asking him to grant the privilege that her child might live.

Poor little daughter, we both have lived in the land of exile, for I cannot believe that the roof which covers Polly could ever be home for you. For man, home is not the place where he is born, but where he has been happy—for a woman more perhaps where she has been a wife and mother. If you are happily married, you are no longer homeless.

There was a time when I set love above all other things. Nothing else could satisfy me. It seemed life's only treasure, and I sang with Heine:

"Ich muss ja immer streben
Nach der Blume wunderhold,
Was bedeutet' mein ganzes Leben,
Wenn ich sie nicht lieben sollt'."

When love left me, I only wanted you; and even more than you, my sons.

XIX

I HAVE heard that grief grows quiet with years. I believe it is Pascal who says: "*Nous n'avons pas même le don de souffrir longtemps*"; but my heart has never grown reconciled that, living, I lost you. Sometimes I wonder how you look, if you are really like the picture which was once thrust before my eyes under such strange circumstances?

I remember you so enthusiastic, so generous and thoughtful, so warm-hearted towards all those who suffered, and, in your childish way, so ready to make sacrifices. Has the grey woman crushed all this in you, and what weapons did she use to achieve her baneful task, destroy all that was best in you, and poison a child's mind against her mother?

Was there never a voice to woo you back to me? Have all notions of right and wrong been so utterly distorted in your young mind that the voice of conscience no longer speaks?

Among all those who surrounded you there was never one who felt enough for me to send tidings of my child. There has never been one message! I had an old Anglo-Indian friend who sometimes, during the first years, would let me know how you were getting on, but he has now been dead for a long time.

After having pictured my little daughter as a wife and mother, I again think that you are still unmarried, for I cannot believe that you have children, they would have

brought you nearer to me. It was only when I bore your brother that I understood the love a child owes to his mother.

I would have brought you up with the English-woman's sterling qualities and the gracefulness of the French. Nature, I love to remember, gave you one of her most precious gifts, the mysterious attraction which is born with woman—charm. Even as a little girl you subdued all around you by some secret influence; your father often laughed at it, and called you a woman *en miniature*. This ideal and artistic part of yourself should have been developed by the finer influences of life. What has become of it, child?

Has there been no other outlet for it than accompanying Polly to her meetings and committee consultations? I remember that when last I saw her the craze was a new Magdalen home of which she spoke with bated breath. What does she know about life's misery which takes some women by the throat, crushes and holds them down until they surrender—she who never met temptation in her life? Has your warm, tender heart only known the grey woman's cast-iron, well-regulated work in defined charities? I dare not even hope she exempted you from them.

Your husband should be one of your own nation. The antagonism of race is innate, and it is of paramount importance in marriage that there be the same views of life. Stronger even than the great difference of age, which was more and more felt as years came, there was the sad fact that Allan and I were Scotch and French, that nationality with all its influences of education and temperament divided us from the first. That I was not "one of them" accounts for a great part of the sorrow of my life, and the fact that I was French isolated me so

terribly in Scotland that I was never able to obtain any news of you.

I knew no one. So I went to the baker and the green-grocer to get news, if only a word, which might tell me something of my child. I speak English fluently. I never knew how bad my accent was until I stood amidst the cakes and cabbages. They made me repeat what I had said, time after time, and then looked at me, as if to say: "What do you want from us?" I quailed under the suspicious unkindness I read in every line of their faces. . . . Then they said they knew nothing about you and I left.

There is a hosiery establishment where I dealt in former days. I had known the saleswomen as girls, and found them as little expansive as of yore—for this is part of the Scotch character and more particularly of that class. But to deal with stuffs and articles which keep the body warm evidently takes away some of the aridity and coldness of the Scotch nature, for they were really the only people who were kind to me. They even put themselves out of the way, made inquiries upstairs and told me that you sometimes called with Polly, but she managed everything. You spoke little, and sometimes not at all, and you sat on the chair on which I now sat.

I did not repeat these inquiries, and the years have come and gone and brought no tidings from you.

Many events crowd into the time which followed my bringing you home. I had grown restless and longed for things to do, but hedged in on all sides with social duties, I found my self-imposed tasks difficult to fulfil.

I was no longer the thoughtless girl who once on the shore of the Adriatic had looked upon life as a poem,

thinking love was happiness so great that it could never end; but I had kept my first love untouched, and was in as great need of Allan as of old. My whole heart belonged to him, and he had grown blasé.

I had ceased to be the new element in his life which had so charmed him; it seemed as if he had changed during my absence and was anxious to withdraw himself from my life and live his own. He was thankful, as I soon felt, for anything which interested me and "kept me amused," as he would say, but in reality which kept me away from him. Going out had become an effort for him, and when we were at home alone, which still happened far too seldom for me, he was busy reading his newspapers, and lost to all outer things, instead of talking and laughing with me as of old.

He took up one of his old bachelor habits, so he told me, and would lie for hours, sometimes until the early Indian dawn, in his long armchair on the veranda, upon which all the rooms opened. My venetian doors, which took the place of windows, being always unclosed for air, the light of his lamp would shine full upon my bed and prevent me from going to sleep. The thought also that Allan was not coming to me often kept me awake, and I wondered what he found in those papers to make up for all the happiness we had known together. I said little about this, but it was a sore point between us. He once wondered in the morning why I looked so tired, and I told him that I never went to sleep before I heard him enter his room. It then changed, but only for a few days.

XX

"L'homme est un apprenti, la douleur est son maître,
Et nul ne se connaît tant qu'il n'a pas souffert."

PAIN is antagonistic to me, I have always revolted against it, feeling I was made for happiness. I have borne it, though I never accepted it, "*aber fragt mich nur nicht wie.*" It has remained even to myself the greatest of all mysteries. I used to think that the small troubles, which crowd most lives and are so great at the time, were more difficult to bear than the big ones, but I was mistaken. Sorrow leaves a trail behind, and is never forgotten; whilst worries are replaced by other worries, and put out of the memory as if they had never existed.

Amidst every comfort of life and many satisfactions, the joy also of being with your father and you, the longing for my little sons was deeply buried in my heart. Polly's letters, coming regularly as of old, brought tidings of them, but often proved a source of annoyance. With years and my growing ascendancy, I had ceased to be her target, and now that the two darlings were in her charge I looked with impatience for her epistles.

For some inexplicable reason, his people always addressed their letters to Allan's office, and it sometimes happened that we were disturbed at night by the special messenger bringing them from the town to the bungalow,

but more often the letters were sent to me by Allan after the general mail had been distributed.

Those of your grandfather were mere eulogies of all that Polly was doing for our children. Hers were homilies and lengthy recitals of the treats she was giving them on special days, but seldom spoke of those intimate details concerning temperament and character which are of such absorbing interest to a mother. She often raised vexatious questions and made unkind remarks, but, tactless as I knew her to be, I overlooked them. After the first six months had passed, she told me that your brothers had quite forgotten their French, in fact they no longer understood a single word, and had become quite Scotch. It grieved me deeply that they had ceased to know their mother's beautiful language, which they had spoken so well, but I thought Polly did not understand.

My mother was a large-minded, generous woman. She fostered my naturally optimistic nature, so that the littleness of mankind more often escapes my notice than their good qualities. I had made a flying visit and seen the little men installed in Scotland. Their accent would wear off, I thought, and they seemed to be well taken care of. In any case they were well fed—plain dishes and baby food being the strong points of Scotch cuisine—and I had been told heart-rending tales of how some Anglo-Indian children are treated away from their parents. My sons must be Englishmen like their father—I would not have them brought up in France—and as I was such an utter stranger in England I thought it was to their interest to overlook many things I might have wished different.

As for estranging influences, I did not believe in them. I knew I had lost my darlings for a while; I certainly would not have wished them to regret me, I

PROFESSOR

OF THE

NEW YORK

UNIVERSITY

wanted them to be happy. My love was so full of trust, that I felt a week with me would undo decades of Polly. Once reunited they would belong to me, as if we had never parted. In the meantime they were certainly happier than had they been with strangers; so at least I thought, fool that I was.

There were special epochs, marked by seasons or events, which offered Polly immunity from my hasty visits. She chose them more especially, as it afterwards dawned upon me, to wound me through my children by giving me the details I had asked her for. She would expatiate upon Laurent's qualities—dear little son with his mother's face but all the reserve of the north—and say what essential attributes calm and patience were, and how they made Laurent more especially theirs. At other times, she would wonder at a trait in Montfort which was not characteristic of the Scotch, and ask us whence we thought he got it. Gradually I understood the petty spite of it all—I confess it took me some time. It made me feel very bitter towards your aunt, the more so as Allan did not look upon it as I did.

"I am sure, Eleonore, you are quite wrong," he said. "I wonder why you have become suddenly so suspicious of my sister, so quite without rhyme or reason; you who trust everyone."

He evidently had taken things in, for after six weeks—the time needed for an interchange of letters—the vague insinuations stopped, depriving me though of intimate news of my darlings.

The character traits dished up with a sting had contained sweetness also, and I thought how foolish I had been to mind what Polly said. Those slight touches had brought my two little men far nearer to me than more lengthy descriptions would have done. Montfort

in his wayward, restless moods; brilliant, eager to succeed, yet lacking endurance to accomplish his project. Laurent, thoughtful, less gifted than his brother, yet more steadfast, truer, and more loving perhaps also, who wrote once to his father after long, long months of separation and hostile influence:

“Tell mother that I love her.”

Oh! hearts of my little sons. You who in your babyhood nestled so close to my breast, Polly did us all a deep wrong thus to estrange us!

XXI

A MONTH or more passed without bringing us the weekly budget, though Polly wrote one or two letters direct to the bungalow, assuring me that both boys were well and happy. We had just passed through an anxious time. Montfort had been down with scarlet fever. Hired nurses had taken care of him, and the little brothers had been separated; but he was convalescent now and my mind, not being given to forebodings, was kept busy with a thousand things. Still I wondered at times why Allan had no letters.

The carriage was taking us to the train, to spend the rainy season in Dula. Half-way to the station, the runner thrust the mail letters into my hand. I saw one with your grandfather's writing and the word “Private” marked in the corner, and handed it to your father. I understood that this was one of many received

during the past weeks which he had not shown me, so as not to "trouble me." Now he decided that it was better I should know the truth.

Your Uncle Hal, whom we all believed a gay bachelor, had been married for years to a woman socially his inferior. Responsibilities with which he was unable to cope had made him lead a wild life, which was taking him to a premature grave. The wife, not knowing the address of the family, had applied to her husband's partner. He in his turn had communicated with Hal's people, telling them that your uncle was dying, and his wife and two children were unprovided for. The letter explained at great length that the unfortunate woman was married in a manner only legal if accomplished in Scotland. Hal had written her name in a Bible, acknowledging her as his wife; but this had been done in England.

Polly was writing from beside her dying brother, who had entrusted his wife and children to her. Father and daughter, much more eager about their own interests than the welfare of Hal's family, debated in their letters if they really had duties towards them, and since there were no marriage lines, if the marriage was binding, "*comme si la parole donnée ne valait pas tous les écrits*," as my darling mother used to say.

I did not doubt for one moment that your father would do the right thing.

"Poor fellow," I said, "if he had told me when last I saw him, we might have helped. There is only one thing to be done now, Allan. Let me go at once. The woman is his wife in every sense, legal and other, and the children are his. We must look after them."

Your father looked at me askance. Had he expected something else?

"This is a matter my people and I must manage. You do not understand."

At the station we parted, you and I to go to Dula, he to return home. I was bewildered, dissatisfied, bitter at heart too. Allan wrote and tried to explain, but I could not understand how wrong can ever be right. He then came up to talk the matter over with me. His words still seem to ring in my ear, for they touched the very spring of life.

"It is because I care for your opinion that I have come. You must try and see things as I do. I will have nothing to do with the woman. She is not Hal's wife. There was no marriage, there is no obligation. What would the people who knew him think if they saw the children, and heard that he had had a mistress? You are thoughtless, Eleonore. Do you not see the shame which would fall upon my family?"

Polly had understood how deeply the disgrace would wound Allan's *amour-propre*. To mitigate the shock, she opened one of the shutters which, added to a locked door, as Barrie says, close every Scot's *for intérieur*. For once the woman spoke in her. She wrote about Hal's little seven-year-old daughter, the child's sweet, winning ways, and how she clung to her dying father. The boy, one year older, was a sturdy, handsome lad, named after Hal. She told us how pleased the children had been when she and her father arrived, and how at once they greeted them as "Auntie" and "Grandpapa."

Allan and I had never once done anything in opposition to the other's wishes. Where we differed, we always had finally agreed. Now that I was only asking him for what was right, surely he would not refuse. Hal's wife was a stranger to me—not even of my own race—but she was suffering, and great sympathy sprang

up in my heart for her. There was more. For one moment, rapid as a flash of light, my spirit divined the future. In her sorrow there seemed to vibrate vague echoes of sorrows past, of woes which were to enter my life also.

"Polly must not take the children away from their mother. Let me go. Do let me go and help them."

Eagerly, passionately I pleaded, as if it were my own cause, and when I had finished I went up to him with my arms outstretched, saying:

"Allan, do it for my sake."

He looked at me. On his set face I read my reply. Mistrust entered and made a cleft in my soul. It seemed for one moment as if we had become strangers. I then understood that nothing would ever change your father's point of view. I also felt that I could not bear to be with him after what had passed. So I went to your room, took you in my arms, and after giving you many kisses told Louise that I was called home on business, and to order the carriage.

As soon as it came, I drove to the station without saying good-bye to Allan. It was only there that I understood what I had done, and would have given worlds to undo it. I wished to go back, but I had sent the carriage away. Through the coachman he would know where I was, and come and fetch me. Mistrust and love were fighting one another, but love was greater and would not be conquered. Cowardly regrets were wooing me back. He might come at any moment, and in any case the afternoon train was only leaving in four hours.

I spent the whole long day in the waiting-room, for at two I had not the courage to leave; so I waited for the night train and wired home at the last moment for

the carriage to meet me. Until the very moment the train started I had hoped to see Allan on the platform. Once *en route*, I comforted myself with the thought that he would follow me next day.

He did not come, nor did he write, and though his presence was urgently needed (as I learnt from his friend Mr. Mowbray, who called and wondered at my being back alone), your father remained away. During ten days I heard nothing of him except through Louise, who wrote me daily about you. My letters and telegrams to him remained unanswered.

High ideals demand sacrifice, child. Those who wish to accomplish a duty must not be deterred by what they will suffer. I was weak. My soul no longer desired to do the one right thing, and was ready for any kind of compromise so as to be again at peace with your father.

When Allan returned there was the same look on his face which in Dula had opened a gulf between us. He did not speak to me. We only met at meals before the servants. There he would bow, as he was in the habit of doing before sitting down, and ask me two or three unimportant questions about food and drink. This was all.

Windows and doors stand wide open day and night in India, and there is no privacy whatever until the servants have left the house. After twelve more days I went to him late at night. It was a great effort for my proud spirit. I felt, moreover, I was acting a lie, bartering my self-respect, and, what is more, the feeling of right, for a dish of lentils.

Allan was lying in his long cane chair reading.

"What do you want?" he said. "Have you had time to change your mind?"

I said I had—yes, I did say so. It seemed then the only thing to do, for my heart was breaking with longing for him. I told him that he understood things better than I did. I evidently had been wrong, and would henceforth be guided by him.

All I remember his saying is:

“I did not mind your going away. It is your words I mind. You were like a tigress who fights for her young. You forget that these matters have to be decided by my people and me.”

The next day I returned to Dula. The lamps were burning and my horse began to neigh when I arrived. You were fast asleep; but when I took you from your bed you were so glad to see me that with your exquisite hands—dear little hands, I still feel them—you caressed my face. That was the first time you made me forget my sorrow, but after that you remained my little comforter.

The letters from Scotland still referring to Hal were now sent regularly to me by your father, as if he wished them to speak instead of him. When your uncle died, only three rooms in the house at Croydon were furnished. Your grandfather wrote that his little grandson had brought him Hal's gold watch which his father gave him before dying, and asked him to take care of it.

Poor little man! He did not know he was putting his treasure into the hands of his worst enemy; for the old man never gave it back. Years after he offered it to me for one of your brothers. I looked at him and shuddered. He seemed to understand, for without a word he put it away.

Hal's last words had been: “It is all out. Now do the best for them.”

But your grandfather, when he found that “they had

not been legally married, went away satisfied" leaving his son's wife and children—for they were that, Reine—to starve or worse. I blame myself bitterly.

Allan telegraphed that his brother was dead, and I went down the next day. In that hour of sorrow I felt sure I should again find my true love.

When I reached home the table was laid for a dinner-party. Your father looked half-ashamed and wished to excuse himself.

"That is all right," I said. "La Rochefoucauld says that we feel less the loss of our best friend after a good dinner. It will cheer you up."

We did not again refer to Hal's death, not on that day nor ever after. I know nothing of the wife and children; but she must have been a proud woman, for she never once troubled her husband's people after they had betrayed her.

I have often wondered why Polly did not look after those children who were in want of everything, instead of taking mine—but no, I have not wondered; I know. Her interest lay with the children of her wealthy brother.

XXII

"... Le cœur de l'homme est plein d'oubli;
C'est une eau qui remue et ne garde aucun pli."

THE human heart likes to lay the responsibility of its own cowardly acts upon others.

When I had left Allan in Dula, I believed I should never be happy again, but it is part of my nature to

draw all possible happiness from surrounding circumstances. Not only did the regrets at being unable to help Eva and her children soon cease; but lacking even the moral courage to face my guilt, I persuaded myself that Allan, knowing things better, it was only natural he should judge for both of us, and I took up the old life *comme si de rien n'était*.

December brought my birthday. Your father was late that evening, and when he drove up I heard him inquiring where I was. He always expected me to be waiting for him under the porch, and when I was not there his first question was for me. I was dressing, so he knocked at my door and asked me to make haste. When I was ready I went to him and as he kissed me he put into my hands a small casket with the most beautiful diamond star I ever saw. A poem accompanied it which to me was an even more exquisite gift. I wish I had kept it for your sake. Allan asked me for it to have it printed. He did not return it, and I forgot to inquire about it at the time; later on I no longer wished for it. Knowing the poem by heart, I thought I should never forget it, but it forms part of that past which I have striven so hard to put away that now I can only gather fragments. I have buried it so deeply that, try as I will, I cannot find it all, not even for you; for much of the sweet—and the bitter too, child—is forgotten.

Since that December day, events have crowded into my life, enough to conquer stronger and better souls than I. Long years have passed since first I tried to stifle remembrance. At first the memory of "pleasure with dry lips and pain that walks by night" would come and wake me up. It would sit at my bedside, clutch me in its arms and say:

"Here I am. What will you do now?"

Do you wonder that I have tried to forget?

The poem said that, years having put their crown on all your mother had endeavoured to accomplish, she would depart "a glory to her children's name." They were beautiful words; and oh! to remember what life has been in its brutal reality! . . .

Once more Polly's letters began to annoy me greatly. During all the years of our married life, I never read one of Allan's letters to his people; he did not even write them at home. Thus I did not know what he had told them about Hal's death and what I thought of it; though Polly's overbearing tone and her arrogance in making arrangements for my sons without consulting me, led me to suspect that she knew of my defeated endeavours for our sister Eva and her children. She evidently felt "top-dog," as the schoolboy says.

Some Anglo-Indian friends were visiting Scotland, and your father asked them to have a look at your brothers. They were greatly shocked to find them in the charge of an uneducated girl with the most awful accent. This decided me that I must have them back.

To bring them to India was out of the question so I resolved to go to Europe.

I wished you and your brothers to know German. As for French, that would soon come to my sons, and you and I never spoke anything else. I settled upon Weimar where some of my mother's people had lived ever since the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. I had spent many happy hours with them in my childhood.

A thunderbolt falling from a clear sky would not have surprised Polly and her father more than when they were told that I was coming; and to have the children ready. They wrote the most extraordinary letters with ridiculous comments, telling us among other things that

your little brothers would be overtaught and most likely become "idiots."

Your brothers were not *meines Geistes Kinder*, not even you were, *petite*. None of you loved study for itself, though I believe Montfort and Laurent, with their mother beside them, would have grown fond of it. In any case I wished them to know German, and though I have failed in many endeavours, I like to remember that I succeeded in this.

Your father was not able to accompany us, so you and I set off alone, he promising to join us. As soon as we had taken a house, Louise went to fetch my darlings—after four years' separation. When a few hours had passed it seemed as if they had never left me.

Numerous dainties accompanied the little men. The tins of golden syrup were specially destined for Laurent, who would not take his porridge without it. I had been brought up so much more sternly—and it has proved such a stand-by for me. Simplicity was a rule I applied to your education, for it is the secret of happiness. She who has distorted everything in my life, imputing base motives even to actions which demanded great self-sacrifice, must have spoken to you of my tyrannical methods, as she insinuated to Allan. Do not believe her, little one. When occasion demanded sternness, I always began with being stern to myself.

I had made great sacrifices to come to Germany, and I wished all of you to know German as soon as possible so that you might enjoy things. I did all I could do towards it. Before Montfort and Laurent arrived, I settled on a school. It was the best in Weimar, and the director was not only a great scholar, but also a distinguished man full of sympathy for England and everything English. His wife was an Englishwoman. From

the first I only spoke German with my little trio, except on Sundays when all was English.

Have you forgotten everything, Reine? Do you not remember how, at the end of my solitary dinner, you would come, all three of you, and sit down with me for dessert? We would then go to the drawing-room, you in white, the darlings in their kilts. We played and laughed together; the German games helped you, and I used many ingenious devices. After six weeks all of you spoke German fluently.

On a Sunday we would go out and be so happy together that now, whilst I write, I think that perhaps after all I have had my joy all heaped up in a few brief months—whilst other mothers have it stretched out over a wider era. At night, after you had been put to bed, I would come to the room which you three shared, opposite mine, and see that you were comfortable for the night. You would call me "dear little mothie," and ask me to kiss you again and again, and sometimes I blamed myself greatly for being such a big child, myself, instead of being stern, as I ought to have been, and making you go to sleep.

You were so sweet and gentle, Reine, you seemed sometimes too perfect, and there is really not one naughtiness I remember about you. Your brothers, being boys, were different; but they were certainly dear and well behaved, only at times I wished them more open, for they never spoke about your grandfather and aunts. It was as if they felt that I would not like the subject, or had listened to unfavourable comments on their mother, and now felt—for children are pitiless judges—that it was all different. I noticed this shortly after they returned, but soon the impression wore off, and until later I did not remember it.

XXIII

It seems that sorrow makes us better understand the suffering of others, but happiness has a beneficial influence upon our character.

When good things came—and they often came, child—I always wished to share them with others. There is no merit in this, for I never enjoyed solitary pleasures. In the delight of having my darlings back, my heart opened out towards the solitary old maids in Scotland. Polly must have loved my dear little sons in her own way; no heart could be so barren as not to go out to them; she must suffer at having lost them. Forgetting her former aggressions my heart softened towards her. She was now dependent upon me for news. Your little brothers never wrote unless I made them, for childhood forgets, and when with their mother they had only eyes and thoughts for her. Thus I wrote to your grandfather and Polly, giving them news of all, even of you, the little daughter whom they had not yet seen, my “duplicate,” as your father called you. My letters were frequent and long. Correspondence has this charming feature, that it takes away the sharp edge of words, and Polly, having no longer to dictate but simply to listen, endeavoured to be very nice to me. She succeeded. Her regrets for my darlings and my love for them formed a new bond between us; my letters to her were a pleasure; hers, welcome.

Fate took me by the hand and unconsciously I set off

again on the road where one day I should find myself alone.

In spring Allan arrived, and I had to nurse him, for he was ill and could take but little notice of us. I understood at once that he did not like Germany, nor could he bear the "barbarous language," as he called it, of which he did not understand one word, though he seemed gratified that you three spoke it so fluently. When he was able to go about it was summer. Nothing pleased him; he disliked the Anlagen before our house, the people, their dresses and ways—all the things we had liked so much that we naturally thought he would like them too. The paved street, I believe, annoyed him most; he wondered why they had no flagstones here, and why I had chosen this town. No, he "would not be troubled with distant relations who could not speak his language, they were without interest for him." Thus we paid no visits together, nor were those which had been paid to me returned, and I offended those dear, kind people grievously. As at Clarens, I felt that Allan was lost when out of his element, and it greatly depressed me.

Your father was not accustomed to the company of children. I remember his look of surprise when a little boy went up to him once and put up his face for a kiss. He thought it very "middle-class" to have you with us when we went out, so you were left behind. Nature had not given him the power of adaptation, he could not share your tastes nor enter into your childish pleasures, and in the evening you no longer came to play with me but remained in the nursery. He only needed my company, he said.

That he should wish for it had once been my supreme desire, but now the circle which encompassed his life

and mine, with you taken out of it, seemed so narrow as to crush me, and I wondered if love itself was wearing out.

My life had been so full of you that the days of "parade" seemed endless, and I began to look back upon our happy times together with longing. It was not that your father really needed me—all might still have been well had it been so—nor do I believe that it was in his nature to be jealous of anyone; he only wished "not to be left out in the cold."

He felt very dependent upon me and this irritated him.

"You have had the children for months, now take care of me. What can I do alone in this barbarous place where there is nothing to do?"

I had to sit beside him for hours, he asleep, whilst I was longing to be out and about with you. There is a good theatre in Weimar, and your father cared for music; but not knowing the language he refused to go even to the Opera. The Tower of Babel has to account for more than people think!

I was eating my soul out for something to do when you, *petite*, fell ill with scarlet fever. There were no hired nurses this time, I looked after you day and night. Your illness did not assume the malignant form it takes in more northern countries; but your convalescence was long and tedious, and in the midst of it your father had a relapse and was ordered to leave at a moment's notice for Kissingen. I begged hard to be allowed to remain with you, and he did not insist, only made his own departure dependent upon my coming; so I wired to Madame de Saint-Jean, and she kindly consented to take my place. I am pleased I went, for those four weeks in Bavaria were almost the last beautiful days of our love.

Wagner's "Rheingold" was given that year at Bayreuth, so we went. I enjoyed it more than I can tell you, for years had passed since I first had come here, and now I understood things better.

The treasure of the Nibelungen sunk deep in the Rhine is the keynote of the whole, and through it all there sounds the tragic note of love which had once been so tender, though now:

"Mit Leide war beendet
Des Königs hohes Fest,
Wie stets zu allem Ende
Die Liebe Leid nur lässt."

The words drew me as by a lure. I had heard them long before any thought of love had entered my soul. Now beside him whom I loved more than all the world, they seemed to take a new significance. For the first time I understood their meaning and trembled. Since this was the common law, in my life also Venus might some day *s'acharner à sa proie*.

Now that I look back upon my life, I know that my love for your father overtowered all the rest. I was the gambler who stakes his all upon the throw of the dice; for though my life has been a succession of the most startling episodes, it only contained one romance, my meeting with your father; and our love was for years a melody without a jarring note.

Have I been right to tell you how happy I was, and how I worshipped him? My heart long ago unlearned to linger on these memories, and now as I write I wonder if I should bare to you the heart's innermost recess. Does the wanderer who has lost in the shipwreck all he holds dearest stop to extol past joys? No, he fills the air with his woe. Thus perhaps I should have done, but

I do not want sympathy, for none can bring comfort. Only I wish you, his child and mine, to know that I once lived.

I do not grudge that I paid for my happiness with suffering—one always pays. What I rebel against is that our great love ended as it did end.

“Was vergangen kehrt nie wieder, aber ging’ es leuchtend unter, lange noch strahlet es zurück.” If only he and I might have said that!

Had our love ended in a cataclysm; had great floods drowned it, or fire strong as death destroyed it, I could have borne it. But it went away in shame and despair and left me desolate.

XXIV

“Truly that hour foretold
Sorrow to this.”

I HAD been so happy with Allan, away from you, that when I returned and you met me on the threshold, you were to me like a living reproach, dear little daughter. You had grown so thin and looked so weak that I fell on my knees, and, taking you in my arms, wept aloud—and this I very seldom have done. On your dear little face were the marks of the illness, and I was told that one night the mask had fallen and you had freed your hands and scratched your face. I anathematised those happy four weeks I had spent away when my place should have been beside you.

I look upon a woman's appearance as of such paramount importance that I felt sick at heart at the ravages done upon your beautiful little features. Allan also was very unhappy to see me so terribly grieved. In India such marks are very common, and I remembered an old Hindu woman once telling me how after smallpox she had nightly anointed her son's face, gently rubbing it, and how the scars had gone. It was in a much milder form with you, so I at once set to the task. You know that I succeeded.

Allan, seeing the delight of my little trio, rejoiced with us that we were reunited. My disappointment and grief about you, your happiness at having me again, had brought us all so close together that we were indeed a very happy family.

The people in Scotland had never seen you. I do not think they minded. It is difficult to love those one only knows from hearsay. But your father grew very fond of you after his return, Reine, and much desired that they should see you. So thinking that a change might do you good, we three left for Scotland, to Allan's great joy, and to mine too, for I always liked to give him pleasure.

Nothing could have been kinder and warmer than their reception of me. It seemed as if a bitter word or thought could never have existed between us. All was different from what it ever had been. So much affection and tender interest were showered upon me during our sojourn, so many things told and repeated which were specially destined to make me feel proud and happy, that I began to think all in the past had been a misunderstanding due to me, perhaps, as much as to them, and that now we understood one another perfectly and harmony would for ever reign between us. I must tell

you—so that you may understand how I felt—that a week after my arrival I was thanking Allan, yes thanking him, that he had brought me here.

He and I were to return to India together in the spring; you, child, would naturally come back with us. At your age your brothers had remained behind, but it seemed impossible to leave without you. Your father and I made no plans whatever for the little boys. He always had left me to decide matters, nor did he like to touch upon that painful subject. He knew how terrible the thought of a separation was to me, so we let things slide. We were so happy together—no longer four but five to love one another—looking forward to months together, after which we would decide about our little sons. Our darlings were beside themselves with joy to have mother and father back, and all the lovely things they had brought them; when a telegram, on a Monday much blacker than those of old, called Allan back to India.

I cannot tell you what I felt. The gods who thirst for the misery of mankind might well have left me those few poor months!

Three days after the call he was to leave. My first impulse was to send your brothers to Scotland, but it was all too sudden. The director of their college had told me that it was essential to give them another six months to make them thoroughly proficient in German. It seemed my duty to remain with them, and the time was so short, so terribly short, for the mail was leaving Brindisi on the following Saturday. So at last we agreed that Allan should leave alone, and I join him in the spring.

The last night we spent together bore the woes of a lifetime. The rain-drops were beating mercilessly

against the window-panes. They were my tears, Reine. I had none left to shed.

"Do not grieve so, Eleonore," he said. "Six months is a short time, and we shall be together again. The thought of our great love must make you strong. You will be brave for my sake, and our children are there to comfort you."

We had come late to my room, for Allan was to start early next morning, and neither of us felt as if we could sleep. I was cold, so I went to bed to find refuge in that last hour near him, and forget the fear of the morrow. He took me in his arms gently, as one does a child who is frightened and must be comforted, as he had done on our bridal night when first he was mine.

Now his words came as they had come then, telling me that because of the great love, which after all those years still filled his being, I was dearer to him than life itself. He opened his soul to me as never before, pouring out his love as one pours perfume from an alabaster vase.

XXV

*"En est-il donc moins vrai que la lumière existe,
Et faut-il l'oublier du moment qu'il fait nuit?"*

HE left me next morning. I was stunned.

I wish I could show you the picture that comes before my eyes as I write. Allan is standing at the window of the compartment, waving his hand to me as the train slowly steams away.

We had often been separated before, but it had never seemed so terrible. That hour was full of sadness, child, yet it does me good to remember how my whole heart belonged to him then, when he—friend, confidant, lover, husband—was still worthy of my love.

When I returned home I went straight to the room where only an hour ago we had been together. His words, inspiring me with courage, still floated around me. It was impossible that he was already so far away. I knelt beside the bed where for the last time my fevered spirit had quieted under his touch.

The bell rang, and I heard Laurent's voice asking for me. What could be the matter that he was back so soon? The mother's heart, stronger than the wife's despair, woke from its stupor and went out to her child.

After saying good-bye to their father, the brothers had left for the College, dressed in the grey kilts I had brought back from Scotland. I had always admired this picturesque costume, which sets off fine limbs. They had constantly worn the dress since our return, and many in the Anlagen had wondered at my "little Highlanders"; but on that morning they wore it for the first time to school, this being the opening day after the holidays.

There was a knock at the door, my little son came in looking painfully excited, and fell sobbing into my arms, the refuge you all knew so well.

"What is the matter, my Laurent? Tell mother all about it."

Amidst tears and many a passionate word—has my son outgrown those burning fits of despair, as his mother learnt to do long ago?—he told me how, at recreation time in the playground, the boys had hooted

and thrown stones at him on account of the unusual dress.

He was very fond of me, and often noticed what escaped others. Suddenly he remembered that Allan was gone.

"You are troubled, mothie, I see it in your eyes. Did you weep much when father left? Don't be sorry for me, it will be all right."

.
We four took up life again as before your father came; my regrets quieted down, but things were different. Before his coming. I had been happily awaiting his arrival; now, though my dear children still filled my thoughts, I was longing to be back with him in our Indian home.

After your father went, I became once again your undisputed property. We went everywhere together. I showed you all the beauty of the town. We also visited the charming surroundings, but you were most interested in the places where I had played as a child.

There I would tell you things of my own childhood, and you could never fathom that I had once been small like you, and thought it wonderful.

The north put his stamp on all of you. Of the south you only had the passionate outbursts, the grief which seems eternal. You were not imaginative children and could not understand me when I told you of my old Breton nurse who had peopled the first years of my life with all kinds of superstitions. The goblins, sprites, gnomes, and jinns of old legends, who had been my constant companions, only bewildered you.

I had been a wild, wayward child, and would not play with dolls. I dissected their heads to know what was inside, but you, Reine, sometimes sat beside me for

hours with a doll in your arms, talking to her whilst I was attending to more important things.

Neither of you cared much for toys, not even for the beautiful mailcart we brought from Scotland. It was a great novelty then, and created a sensation in the Anlagen, as Montfort pushed Laurent and you along.

You cared most for your dolls, *petite*. I also liked them when they were dolls for you. At our evening playtime which we resumed after your father went, my fingers made many beautiful things for your queens and princesses. I loved to dress your dolls with you. It made me think of the time when I studied the art of how to dress my first baby.

Among the little garments in your tiny drawers and cupboards you would lay sachets and cover the piles with tissue paper, as you had seen your mother do in India. Your brothers would look at everything, and you would tell them about our home by the sea and all the treasures it held; for they had forgotten it.

My thoughts often wander back to that home. It lies before me as it was then. Does it mourn us, as I have mourned all the happiness it once held? India and my love of beauty form a distinct part of my life, very different from the present. Now my ascetic tendency predominates; all is stern around me. There is no ornament in my room, but it is better so, it prevents me from looking back. Still I sometimes wonder if St. Simon the Stylite ever longed to be again amid the crowd, when he was on his pillar.

After Christmas we had dry, hard frost. It was an ideal winter with a clear, blue sky and pavements as shiny and dry as glass, a splendid time for skating. Your brothers were good at it, *petite*. You also tried to imitate us, and I had to buy you a small pair of skates

—so very small they were! To me the ice was an old friend, so we four spent hours together gliding over the smooth sparkling surface of the lake. Your brothers sometimes put you and me in a sledge and pushed us along. Do you remember how you never wished them to stop; but they liked best to whirl on with me, and I have no doubt many mothers envied me my bonnie sons in their kilts—they did not mind the frost biting their sturdy legs—and you also, little fairy in white.

As I no longer mind cold or heat I have sometimes wondered why I so dislike the winter. Now I understand. This winter in Germany was the last in my life I spent with my children.

I decided that I would have you three painted. It would be a consolation to have the picture beside me in our Indian home, and such a surprise for your father, who was to know nothing about it until I arrived. It was easy to have it done without his knowledge for he never questioned my expenses and I had an open credit on the Bank of England.

The artist was a friend of Sir Frederick Leighton, and had just come back from a visit to England. He was in love with everything English, and greatly attracted by your brothers' Highland dress—fancy any Scot hearing me classify the kilts as English! He was also charmed by your sweet little face. So he kindly promised to paint you, and putting his soul into the picture made it a masterpiece.

I see the picture—no, I only see you standing between your brothers. It was your right place. In those happy days in Germany all our tenderness centred round you. Your father took the picture from our Indian home even before I left it, and sent it to Polly with all my other treasures. Oil paintings are not stowed away,

it must have hung where you have lived for so many years, where you still may live. Has it never spoken to you?

You must remember the time we four spent together in the painter's studio whilst your forms grew upon the canvas, and how I made a pleasure for you of the tedious hours. I should have thought the painting would have brought to you an echo of our happy words. Sometimes I fear you must be different from all those I have known; for it seems as if you never had given a soul to things, as most of us do.

I did not leave Germany in spring as Allan and I had decided. When the time drew near he did not seem very anxious for my return.

"The new disease, influenza, is here. It is very insidious, and both you and Reine might get it if you came out in spring. Wait until the hot weather is over," he wrote.

When the school broke up we four spent the summer travelling about. I was greatly troubled as to where I should leave your brothers. They were getting on splendidly at school and were very fond of their special master, Herr Dahn; so I thought of leaving them in his charge. They were delighted at the idea of remaining in Germany; but I felt that my boys were English, and knew by experience that the land of exile, however dear, can never be home.

While I was debating, Madame de Saint-Jean fell ill and sent for you and me. So I left your brothers behind in the charge of "Fräulein," the German governess. I wished to settle then and there about my little sons and be free from conflicting thoughts; but I could not decide at a moment's notice, and Madame, who was waiting for us, would advise me.

My mother's sorrow had ripened me as a child, and made me self-reliant, "far too independent" Polly used to say; but those I loved always guided me. I was to them like clay in the potter's hand. I may have liked to follow my headlong course for mere trifles, but ever since I can remember I have longed to lean upon a stronger nature. The thirst for sympathy has devoured me all through life—"Nul ne comprend l'autre, le monde est un grand désert." Even in our happy days I often felt that Allan did not understand me.

A weak desire to share with others responsibilities which I should have borne myself has been one of the destructive forces of my life; for invariably had I followed my own intuition, things would have turned out differently and better.

I should have known that the mastery of presentiments must be acknowledged. At the decisive moments of my life there always came a warning. My old tutor called me a *Pechvogel* when I was a child. He was right. I should have remembered and resented Polly's conduct in the past. I was always too trusting, forgetting that my enemy was lying in ambush.

Her letters continued coming, kinder and more sympathetic as the weeks drew on. She was *aux petits soins*, sending me shortbread of which we were all so fond, and some of the tea she used, which was really *sans pareil*. It was not that she offered to receive your brothers when I left. She only told me how much more comfortable the house had grown since her sister was married—at the age of forty-six! I have often wondered how that miracle child which she had two years later has grown up. A sister, a real sister, could not have been more thoughtful and tender in words. Not only did she enter fully into all my difficulties, she even

went so far as to say that Germany might after all be a good place for the children's education; but she begged me to bring you all on a visit before leaving for India.

I was very foolish to think that Madame could help me. Imbued with the old French idea of the supremacy of the family, she decided there was only one right thing to do. "You must entrust them to their father's people, not give strangers the responsibility of bringing up your children."

Her words made me feel that I should be unfaithful to Allan and the children unless I left them amidst English surroundings.

So I took once again the way to Scotland.

XXVI

MONTFORT and Laurent were still small enough to require a woman's care. I was also anxious that they should not lose their German, as they had their French, so I decided to leave Fräulein, whom I had trained and thought I could trust, with them. I have always looked upon home influence as the most essential part of education, and preferred sending your brothers to a day-, rather than to a boarding-school.

The headmaster of the school on which I settled, recommended by your grandfather, was assisted by his sister and her husband, formerly a don at Oxford. The house was ideally situated, and had such an atmosphere of refinement that it at once impressed me most favourably. So did the principals. I felt that I could

trust them implicitly to take good care of my little sons' souls and minds. All seemed now ready and I wrote to Allan to tell him how well I had arranged everything, and how fortunate I had been to leave our little sons' education in such good hands.

There were many preparations to be made for our return voyage and stay in India. We had been living two years in cold latitudes. I had to see to our outfits—for dress plays an important part in the life of Anglo-Indians—so I made several visits to Paris during those last six weeks you and I spent with your brothers.

As the moment of leaving drew nearer, I used to hurry back, almost before I had left, to have another look at my darlings. Small as you were, *mignonne*, you seemed to understand that as you were going home with me, I was not quite so greedy for you. When they were in bed and called me back again and again those last evenings, you said so sweetly:

“Kiss them first, mother, they will not have you always as I shall.”

I did all I could to make those last days happy for my darlings and less bitter for myself, and tried to gratify all their wishes.

I returned from Paris for the last time on a Wednesday. Every minute had been spent with dressmakers and milliners, and no doubt I often looked at myself in the glass, a thing I seldom do. You three met me on the threshold. Laurent jumped on me, as he loved to do, putting his two legs one on each hip and his arms round my neck. As I looked at his face, I was struck by his resemblance to me. Kissing him again and again, I said:

“How like me you are, Laurent!”

There have been greater sorrows since; but there is

a special sadness in remembering that this little son, the only one to resemble his mother, should have been the first to disappoint her ideal of him. Not only have I had to take this memory back to India; but it has always stood out as the one sad, solitary fact of those last days we spent together, whilst there must have been some happy things which otherwise I should have remembered.

The Friday and Saturday your brothers and I spent shopping together. On Sunday morning, entering the nursery, I saw Laurent hurriedly putting away two golf balls which I had never seen before. I questioned him. At last I learnt that he had taken them from a shop in King Street where we had been buying waterproofs—that he had stolen them.

There are people who believe in a personal God and use the fear of His punishment to influence others. I do not believe in these incantations. I found in my own heart the words to show him the wrong done to himself and to me.

Humiliated pride, the old grief at his want of openness with me, fear for his future, anger at his dishonesty, made me feel desperate; but love and pity for the child I bore were stronger.

I trust my son—if he is alive, he is now a man—remembers what his mother told him in that hour. We left the house both very sad and humble. He seemed contrite, but can even a mother fathom the soul of her child?

I took him to your grandmother's grave—your father lies there to-day. I had sometimes visited the place with you three, wishing you had known my own mother. There I told Laurent what our punishment would be. I trust that he understood a little what I suffered.

He was my child; jointly and separately he and I were answerable for his sin.

"We shall part the day after to-morrow, Laurent. I go far away, life is uncertain, perhaps we shall not meet again. When I leave you on Tuesday I shall not kiss you, nor must I take away a parting kiss from my little son of whom I was so proud."

The following day I went to the shop and returned the golf balls.

A harder ordeal still was before me. Until my last day I shall see Laurent standing on the doorstep when I left. His face was white and drawn, with quivering lips; his eyes looked as if they did not understand why mother was leaving without taking her darling in her arms.

No welcome ever awaited me again on that threshold. I am glad it was so. For me it always holds the figure of my little son from whom I parted without a good-bye kiss, though my heart was crying for it.

XXVII

THE night was drawing on. It was the evening of my return to India, and we were seated on our veranda.

Much had been pressed into the day since early in the morning when we landed. The boat had been expected all through the previous night, so Allan sent outposts to the harbour and slept at the club. His yacht brought him to me at dawn, the first on board. He told us there were great preparations for our welcome at home.

Many had come and gone; but the turmoil was over and we were alone. I went to the nursery to see that all was well with you for the night, as I was in the habit of doing, and came back to my seat beside him.

At last the moment had come for which I had been yearning so long—for there is nothing sweeter in life for man or woman than the love which binds body to body and soul to soul. Possession's rapturous joys were awaiting us. Buried in our love we would forget the long pain of separation; once again be as gods together. Intense expectancy filled my being; it bound me, made me speechless.

Deep silence lay around us, the wash of the sea sounded like a distant moan.

Why were we lingering here? Allan must be as eager as I for the supreme reunion. Every moment was so much taken from our happiness.

His voice broke the silence.

"You used to wish for a *chuprassi*, Eleonore, to sit in the porch, bring your *chits* and receive visitors. I have now settled on two fine fellows, and have ordered braided uniforms with gold cummerbunds and fine *pugris*. I know you like that."

"Well, I don't know. Since I have been in Europe, I have learnt to do without all these servants. I really do not know if I now care to have two idle men sitting all day on the doorsteps. It is just like you to remember my childish wish."

"I know it often vexed you," Allan went on, "that I did not go riding with you. I will come with you as often as I can."

"I would rather ride with you than with anyone in the world; but do not make rash promises. I shall be satisfied if you come sometimes."

With one hand I drew him towards me, the other stroked his face. He drew back with a start.

"There is another thing. You know Mr. Bandy. I have seen a good deal of him whilst you were away. You dislike his accent and his way of speaking, but he is a rising man, and may be very useful to me. I would like you to write and ask him to dinner."

"Allan!" I cried indignantly.

In India the line of demarcation is drawn more distinctly than in England. The parvenu is not liked. In the society which we frequented, Mr. Bandy was not received. I had met him sometimes at native gatherings, and instinctively shrank from him. He was much younger than your father; I wondered what he could see in him. The man was not uneducated. No, it was not that. He was rather pushing and well-informed. Nor did it trouble me that he was of humble origin. I would rather talk to a witty shoe-black than a dull lord.

Whenever I met him, Mr. Bandy was servilely anxious to please me, but I resented his oily manner. I felt as if I had touched something slimy and unpleasant. A presentiment warned me, and I had always told Allan that I strongly objected to him. Nothing would have induced me to have him at my table; but I could not disagree with Allan that night, so I turned aside from the subject.

"Why do you speak to me about Mr. Bandy just at this moment? We will talk about him another day. I am tired, Allan, I will go to bed."

"Good night," he replied. "I also am done up. I scarcely slept all night expecting you. Good night."

.

The night-light was throwing dim shadows into my room, flickering sometimes with a sharp, sudden sound. I was alone in the large bed, my spirit yearning towards him, as so often during the long nights of our separation. The travelling clock beside me had chimed midnight. Minutes pitilessly followed minutes, like drops of water falling into a bowl too full.

The windows of our bedrooms stood wide open. The upper venetian of the doors which separated Allan's room from mine were always ajar. Not the least sound could escape my senses sharpened by waiting. One o'clock struck. I sat up and listened. There was not the faintest stir.

Allan had not looked his own dear self when we parted. What a good thing we had not argued about Mr. Bandy. Perhaps he was ill, lying on his couch waiting for me?

I got up and went to the veranda. The Eastern night, my first one at home, was very mild. The moon was rising, calm and pale, lighting up the park before me, where the great trees threw heavy shadows. They had been saplings when my first-born came. How big they had grown!

I drew the latch from the trellised gate, leading from my part of the veranda to his, and entered the room.

A moon-ray showed me your father on the bed. He was fast asleep. I stood beside him, the mosquito-curtain a barrier between us.

I called him by his name.

There was no reply.

"Allan," I cried aloud, "is anything wrong with you?"

"What are you doing here? Why are you not asleep?" he replied.

"Have I done something to vex you, that you no

longer love me? Why have you not come to me, to your own Eleonore, who since we parted has only lived for this hour?"

"What could you have done? You have done nothing. I am only tired. Let me sleep. Important business awaits me to-morrow."

I lifted the mosquito-curtain and put my hand on his shoulder.

"Do you no longer care for me? You must know how I long for you."

I felt him shudder under my touch. I put my arms round him.

"I have been alone so long. I cannot live without you. Are you not mine?"

He stretched out his hand and drew me towards him—but something was dead between us.

XXVIII

On excuse tant que l'on aime.

When I woke up next morning, the misgivings of the night vanished before the delight of his presence, but they never died. They were always lurking in the shadows, for I vaguely dreaded that this was no longer my Allan.

Nothing in life remains as it once was. The grinding-stone of time models us in its own way. With years, my love for your father had changed, but only grown more intense. I who grow weary of most things, had never felt afraid of the long habit of love, for ours was surrounded by so much poetry. The night before I



had asked myself for the first time, if I had come too late into his life; but I persuaded myself that I was wrong to doubt him. The spring in the desert from which I first drank at Venice would never run dry. I was not yet the pitiless observer of others, and having set love so high, could not believe that it would ever carry with it illusions, weakness, deception.

When I saw your father off in the morning, I went with him to the door of his brougham. As he was about to drive off, he stepped out again. It was not like him to do these impetuous things. When we were seated together on the low couch in my boudoir, he put his arms around me and told me again and again how dear I was to him.

"Trust me, Eleonore," he said, as he gave me the last kiss. "You know that no other woman could ever enter my life."

As soon as the carriage had passed the gate, I sent the servants to the docks to clear the picture, which had been framed before it left Europe. It looked beautiful in the brilliant sunshine. You were delighted with it and wanted to kiss Montfort and Laurent. They were so life-like!

In the evening I was scarcely able to contain my impatience. As soon as I met Allan I wanted to tell him of the surprise at home. We could not go straight back, many greeted me, and again every moment seemed one stolen from my happiness.

When we reached the bungalow I bound up your father's eyes and led him before the picture, which was lighted by torches. He was very pleased, but not so astonished as I had hoped. Perhaps Polly had betrayed the secret. I know she thought me very extravagant, and even said so to your brothers.

The thought of Laurent still disturbed me often. Polly had shown me little sympathy at the time, and never referred to the incident in her letters. I had told Allan about it, but he also thought I gave the matter too much importance, and again I felt the creeping fear that perhaps we did not quite understand one another, certainly not as well as I would have wished. I did not fear that the child would ever do such a thing again; the lesson had been too hard for both of us. The lack of openness at the root of it all troubled me most, for I had noticed a renewed reticence in both brothers as soon as we were in Scotland.

The painful impression faded as days went by. Surrounded by my household gods, the ties of old associations binding me—they have been most lasting and stronger in India than anywhere else—with Allan and you to love beside me, I took up life as it had been before my absence.

Your father had always left me free to do what I liked. There was now even greater latitude than before, but it was a desolate freedom, and only made me restless.

I longed to explore India *pour me retremper l'âme aux sources vives du passé*. At Ancona, on our first drive, I had told Allan of my desire to see Benares, the centre of India's faith, and he had promised to realise my girlish dreams. Living among the English, I had become interested also in the places immortalised by the Mutiny; but above all I wanted to see the East as it really was. There was something which drew my imagination. I thought of hidden treasures, of half-forgotten secrets which would lie open for me behind balconies in closed houses. The question of womanhood, of Indian womanhood, since India was my home, inter-

ested me greatly. I would go and see the sites which good and great women had made famous. I hoped Allan would come with me; but he was full of excuses. I made my itinerary with him—but I went alone.

In the Mahabharata and Ramayana I had read of the heroic deeds of the old Rajputs, so proud of the honour of their women. In the thrilling history of old Rajputana, woman stands out like a diamond set in black enamel. When I visited Chitore it seemed as if the dear, dead women had stepped out of the past to come to me.

Round the deserted fortress, the Rajput Ranis have woven romance. Allah-u-din's fateful passion for Padmani, Bhimsi's Rani, caused a battle and the Rajputs' utter defeat. When the widow of one of the great chieftains mounted the flaming pyre, she lingered and asked her husband's brother-in-arms:

"Tell me once again, oh Brother! how my love bore himself"; and he replied:

"Oh Mother! How can the world tell of his deeds: There were none left to fear or praise him."

When the Mussulman conqueror besieged the town a second time, the Goddess of Chitore ordered twelve crowned heads to meet him. Padmani and Bhimsi had twelve sons; eleven sat each three days on the *gadi*, then met the enemy and encountered death. Ajeysi alone, the youngest-born, the mother's darling, remains. In a deep vault, Prince Bhimsi and the great chieftains assemble "in saffron robes and bridal coronets." A great *johar* is lit and the Rajput women, fourteen thousand in number, Padmani at their head, mount the funeral pyre. The gates of the town are opened wide and Ajeysi, the King and his nobles, bridal coronetted, saffron-robed, step out to meet death. The doors are

closed again, and when Allah-u-din at last enters Chitore he finds, like Napoleon at Moscow, a dead city.

I longed to see the place of the women's sacrifice; but the guide shook his head.

"I cannot show it to you, Sahiba. God alone, taking you by the hand, can lead you to it."

Amber I shall never forget. I still see it in my dreams as I saw it then, leaning against the hills in the glare of the red Rajputana rocks, lofty and tranquil as if it held peace for the soul. Only the shell of the houses is left; the walled gardens lie deserted as if an enemy had passed.

The palace alone has withstood time, and reflects itself in the lake, set in pale brown stone and white marble. As I sat in the large hall, there passed once again before me those proud Rajput women, the Daughters of the Sun, who used to sweep over the marble floors my feet now touched in the flowing robes of the Rajputani—decked as a bride to meet her lord when he came back glorious with the sound of battles—decked as a bride also to meet him when he was brought home dead, and she mounted the funeral pyre to lie beside him.

By the window, I saw her waiting and watching during the long Indian day for tidings of him, looking over the quiet lake across the hills to the north-western plains where the great chieftains fought, wondering what her lord was doing, if the *Charan* would sing his victories or mourn over his death.

Much has been written and said about the old Moghul capital, now that of the Indian Empire; though nothing will ever give it back its former splendour. In the central "Hall of Audience" in the Palace at Delhi, where Babar, founder of the Moghul dynasty, dispensed justice from the peacock-throne to his people of such varied

races and creeds, four hundred years later Bahadur Singh, the last of his descendants, stood for his trial, rebuffed by English soldiers for whom he was "only a nigger."

Wandering aimlessly through the beautiful, deserted chambers, I came upon a small balcony called the *Sharoka* where the Great Moghul was in the habit of showing himself every morning to the common people in the open space before the palace. Here also sat Noor Jehan Begum, "the Light of the World" (Jehangir's Queen, for whom he waited twenty years), when the nobles came to make their salutations and receive her commands, for Jahangir gave her right of sovereignty and entrusted her with the government. Her exquisite face is to be seen on thousands of ivory paintings. Your father gave one, surrounded with diamonds and set as a brooch, to each of my bridesmaids.

Here the old Bahadur Singh heard that the English were coming across the wide expanse of fields which lay before him. I wondered what his thoughts were as he stood alone face to face with the Past. Did he look up at the *Jumna Musjid*, the high mosque of red sandstone, and reproach his gods who had failed him—or higher still to the Ridge, red also, which the English were still holding after a siege of almost four months?

Did his mind turn back and ponder what Babar would have said to such pitiful ending?—Babar, musician, poet, painter, lover, knight-errant, who so loved his kingdom of Ferghan, "the land of snowy mountains, with the perfume of violets, where fat pheasants graze and delicious fruit is gathered by picturesque people." He may have contrasted his weak indolence and the self-indulgence in which he had steeped himself, with the great ancestor who at twenty-three tramped down a snow-peak

for a whole week, accompanied by his nobles, saying afterwards: "It was not the moment to employ authority. At such a time everyone who has spirit does his best, and those who have none are not worth mentioning."

When the game of life was played out, the old King of Thule threw the golden goblet his love had given him into the sea. Babar, in full glory, after having finally vanquished the Rajputs at Agra, issued a manifesto of total abstinence which begins: "Gentlemen and soldiers. Whoso sits down to the feast of Life must end by drinking the cup of Death." Then he broke his golden drinking cup, and poured out his stores of wine.

I will not trouble you with a laborious account of my tour through India. Its memory remains with me as a treasure, and months would not suffice to put down all I saw. If, all through life, the sorrows of the heart were the keenest for me, the joys of the mind, because unalloyed by passion, were the purest and most lasting. In the years which lie behind me, I have often recalled those days of travel, and they have come back to me, brightening my darkest hours with their sunshine. But greater solace even than all their beauty and harmony lay for me in the teaching *du néant de toutes choses*.

One afternoon late, I arrived at Cawnpore. It was thirty-four years after the Mutiny.

"Bring me one of those who have seen it," I said to my men, and they brought me a Rajput, one of the guard who had disobeyed Nana Sahib's order to butcher the women and children in the *Bibi-garh*. He fled and hid until the "devils in petticoats" arrived, twenty-four hours too late, and was spared when Neil dispensed terrible justice to punish horrible crimes.

"If you tell me the whole truth, I will pay you well,"

I said to the erect figure who, proudly pointing to his medal with his left hand, touched with the right his forehead, bowing low before me.

"*Hazur*," he replied, "I shall tell you all I know."

I could not wait, so Juggar Rai and I set out at once.

A single stone remains of the place of the massacre. A garden, green and tranquil, surrounds the well into which the two hundred dead women and children were thrown. Nothing tells of the agonising cries which echoed here, except the inscription over the well:

"These are they which came out of great tribulation."

At first my questions came close, impetuous; but they grew less frequent and more subdued as the tale went on. We stood alone on the spot whence strong Englishmen have fled to weep aloud on the quiet Cawnpore roads—the Eastern soldier, who had seen enacted by his race, amidst floods of blood and tears, such devilish hurt, and I the Western woman who had come here to bring my tribute of sympathy and admiration to those who were mine by the intensity of what I felt for them.

The sun had set, night was falling, and soon only the white marble of the screen shone among the shadows. All was still. Juggar Rai's voice went on monotonously, though at intervals he halted, stirred by feeling; or a sob of mine interrupted him, and he would stop and say:

"*Sahiba*, you asked me to tell you."

And I would make a sign to him to proceed, whilst I listened fearfully, reverentially.

At last he came to the end of his story.

"There was a great uproar in the streets, and people were singing and dancing. Nana Sahib himself shouted the order that the slaughter of the women and children should begin. But we, the sepoy, refused, and some

shot at the ceiling. So he sent for five butchers. They went in with their knives, and shut the door—and I fled. Only the five men who did the work know the horror of Cawnpore.

“God is great *Sahiba*, and people grow old and forget—but we smelt blood for years here in the streets.”

XXIX

WHILE I was travelling about, I lived in a kind of spiritual exaltation, with only one regret, that Allan was not with me to share my joys. His letters and telegrams met me at every halt. They were kind and full of interest in my doings, and bore the refrain: “Remain away as long as you are happy, and above all begrudge yourself nothing.” He told me how well our children were. You, my darling, beside him, and your brothers so far away were “getting every day taller and sturdier.” Polly wrote little of how they got on at school, and a certain delicacy prevented me from inquiring from the headmaster direct, as they were in her charge. When I remembered how scattered we were, I felt sometimes strangely disturbed—disappointed, too, that Allan was not more eager for my return.

Still I was happy even away from him, and enjoyed every hour. The varied scenes were putting their imprint upon my soul, and I felt that come what might their stamp at least would remain. I did not understand yet that the most beautiful sights can leave the heart starving. It is only the personal touch which makes them precious.

Away from all the new impressions and once again with Allan, I knew that I really wanted neither beautiful sights nor varying aspects for my happiness, and that all I had seen had only intensified the longing for him. I had lived entirely absorbed in the past, for time is nothing, impressions only count. They had made me his more closely than before. The knowledge of the frailty of all things human, the intimate conviction of the suffering of others, had purified my passionate heart.

Love for me has always been a force of nature like thunder, the rising flood, the storm—which nothing can resist. If there was truth in the destructive power of time, my love would be stronger. I would belong to him more tenderly. I held time in my hand, we two were suspended over the abyss where everything must end; face to face with life's fleeting hour our love was to triumph, we would hold out against death itself.

I told your father all this on the day of my return. How good it was to see, to touch him, to hear the voice which was sweetest music to my ear! He smiled at my enthusiasm, and seemed greatly interested. We talked a great deal during dinner, but the servants were about, so we kept on the surface. When we were alone, a shadow settled on his face and he grew silent.

"You have always been a dreamer, Eleonore, ever since I have known you. You are as young as when we first met; but I am getting on in years, and can no longer look at things as you do."

Fear crept back into my heart. I had left him far too long alone, I must win him again. I felt sure I should, for when I wished for a thing, I always believed it would come, and your father, child, was to me the One Beloved, of whom the ascetics dream in the Holy Land.

.

Everything had changed. Soon I knew that what I had dreaded ever since my return from Germany was true. There *was* a shadow between us. I would not believe it at first. I rebelled against it as long as I could. Step by step I fought the anguish, but at last, before the facts which spoke, I had to submit. Doubt was not possible. I was no longer the pivot of his life. Love was slowly abandoning us.

The thought that he no longer loved me pursued me. I had given him my whole love, my whole passionate love; body, heart, and soul worshipped him. He had given me, as I believed, all I had once dreamt and hoped for. Now I asked myself if I had been for him after all only the one whom he had met in a desultory hour to rid himself of the burden of his desire. This was dead—no matter how it went—and he no longer had any use for me. I cannot tell you how it began, but something had happened. It stood between us, slight, intangible, impossible to define, growing day by day almost imperceptibly like a rising flood which one day breaks all dams, and fills the land with consternation.

Our lives began to separate. I now seldom saw your father *dans l'intimité*. It hurt to be alone, for the bonds of the flesh are strong.

It was not that he was unkind at first, and certainly not for material things. From the day of our marriage I had used his money—our money as he always said—with the utmost independence. He had lavished gifts upon me. Birthday or name-day, holidays and native festivals had brought me a special token of love. A few days after my first arrival in India he had put a ruby and diamond ring on my finger.

“This is your first holiday,” he had said, “but many will follow.”

You know the ring, Reine, I always wore it, until I gave it to Polly in one of our reconciliations.

He and I had often wandered in the bazaar and discovered treasures. He was clever at hunting out choice articles from their hiding-places in shops. The bungalow was full of them, and my boudoir held priceless gifts. We had thus spent many a happy hour together. Now he was no longer interested in anything. If on a holiday afternoon I would say:

"Come and help me choose something for the house, Allan," he always had an excuse.

"I do not feel well, Eleonore, and very tired. Go alone. You can spend as much as you like."

Then you and I would sometimes go together, but it was not the same thing.

Your father had always been a man of few words. Now, when at home, he would lie whole afternoons on his long chair in the veranda or in his bedroom, and never speak to me. When his bachelor friends came on a Sunday for late breakfast, they stayed the whole afternoon with us, and one of them invariably accompanied us for a ride or a drive. Now it often happened that when I was dressed and the carriage standing under the porch, I would go to his room and still find him in his flannels.

"Allan, my own one, we are ready, come with us! You know I never enjoy anything without you."

And he would reply:

"You have me all day long, and you will soon be back. Go out and enjoy yourself with Mr. So-and-So. I am sick and tired of driving."

He had never cared much for woman's attentions. It was only slowly that he allowed me to perform the small acts which were so precious to me. They now irritated

him. It sounded like the knell of our happy past when he asked me not to trouble to put the spot of lavender-water on the lappels of his dress-coat and fix the button-hole as I had done for so many years. It is the little things of life which hurt. They spring upon us un-awares and crush the heart—for the big sorrows somehow we always find the strength.

Everyone knew how much he had cared for me. Our love had been a good thing. Like the sun which rejoices the universe, it had shed light and warmth. I had always interceded for even the humblest of his underlings. When one of his *peons* wanted new gold braid, a cummerbund, or an increase of pay, he first asked me.

At the beginning I bore my grief silently, for I was in great dread that others might guess. For a long time no one suspected. We went out to dinner-parties and receptions as before—more often even. On weekdays I still drove down and waited before his office until the guard saluted. Nothing had changed outwardly, and the world, which judges according to appearances, believed us as happy as before.

There was nowhere I could turn for comfort. The affection which had been showered upon me in my early years, I had allowed to slide out of my life, like the golden ball which a child lets fall heedlessly from his hand. Some people have the privilege of turning to God. He had given me Allan. He now had taken him away, and my heart felt bitter.

The vista of years lay outstretched before me. Surely love would come back and fill my life again. Once—it was before you came—the first crack in the alabaster vase had seemed the end of all things, but seven years had passed since then, and as the human heart always

begins to hope anew, in time the wound which seemed as if it would never heal again had become an old scar. Since then we had tasted again of love—the most exquisite part; the savour had remained with me. He had roused in me a power of feeling which now incessantly asked for him, more eagerly even. I rebelled against the cruelty of love's forsaking. My whole being demanded a return of past joys. I longed for his tenderness, his kisses, his caresses.

At last I grew tired of living only on the past.

XXX

“To take a pen, a piece of paper and be honest,” may be easy for some. To me truth seems the most elusive of things.

Is it not strange that it should be so difficult, so well-nigh impossible to write the truth about oneself? Where I feel deeply I never can speak about it, without tearing away a part of my being. In this comedy called life, which would be a carnival but for its sadness, where we are all condemned to wear masks, and take a part without being permitted to choose our rôle, what is truth, what is falsehood? Since each deceives himself and deceives the other; and the world is fed on little truths and many lies—illusions some call them.

I have often wondered what is really the truth about myself. Impulses or motives prompt us to act, and when time has set its seal upon events and dimmed their

vision, can we again comprehend and truly express why things were done in the past, the past of long ago or yesterday? For time does not count when surroundings have become so different that, looking back, we seem, even to ourselves, mere shadows moving on the stage of life.

Like Icarus I now break my bonds to soar towards the sun of truth. My wings are not waxen, child. My message is sure-footed and will reach you. Nor do I mind for myself the grievous pain it contains.

Action has always been for me the only means of counteracting heartache. I have never passively submitted to grief, I have worked, ridden, walked it off. In the battle with sorrow, when it was close upon me, ready to strike me down, I met it standing. But it is not true that the bold man wins the day. Only he who can wait does win. Allan had shown neither exuberant enthusiasm during our courtship, nor self-assertion in the long years of our wedded happiness. Even now, when everything had come to the straining point, he uttered no harsh word, he simply opposed to all my endeavours to bring him back to me and my love the greatest of all life's forces—that of inertia.

During our drives we spoke of indifferent things. At the club we were never alone. At home the servants surrounded us. Sometimes when dressed for dinner, I felt I had not the courage to sit it out beside him, and ordered mine to be served in my boudoir, sending a message to Allan that I was not well, and would he kindly excuse me.

The strain grew so great that sometimes at night when the servants had left and the house was still, I felt impelled to go to his room or to the back veranda where he now often sat, because it left him more free to go to his

room when he liked, without my knowing it. "It will disturb you less," he had said at the beginning. I always found him lying in his long chair with the *Times of India* or *Eastern Gazette* in his hand—I never understood how he could spend such long hours over them. He did not get up now, as when my coming had been a pleasure for him; nor even ask me to sit down. He merely looked at me over the newspaper and said:

"I thought you were too ill to come to dinner! What do you want now?"

He knew why I had come. Was he not mine? Had I not borne his children? Had we not belonged one to the other not for one hour, not for one day; but for a lifetime, as it seemed then. He knew I had come to claim the rights and privileges love gave me.

We women, I and many others, have been "cribbed, cabined, confined," from our very childhood, and few among us know what we owe to ourselves. Taught that "the woman was created for the man" we look upon our body as a thing to be ashamed of, instead of considering it our proudest treasure; since it gives souls to the world.

For man and woman who love, to belong to one another is the only thing divine on this poor earth, the only thing which makes us sometimes forget *le mal de vivre*. It was natural that I longed for him ardently, passionately. To my calmer and more mature judgment to-day, it seems that the contrary would have been unnatural, and a sin towards myself. He understood that my whole being, soul and body, was calling for him.

Never with a word did I dare give the longing shape, nor did he. You can touch upon love's mysteries with the Beloved One when soul responds to soul; to claim

my due now was impossible—it almost seemed a cause of shame.

“Allan,” I would say, “you know I want you, your society, your sympathy, your love. Why do you leave me so much alone? Do you no longer care for me?”

In the bygone days when the least trouble had darkened my life, I had invariably come to him, who was ever ready to sympathise and comfort me. Now he would only look annoyed and say:

“You are growing more exacting every day. I do not know what you want from me. There is only one thing I want—to be left alone.”

I would return to my room; but sometimes, after lying awake for hours and finding it impossible to sleep, I would go back, and, unasked, sit beside him in the still night. Generally he was asleep or pretended to be so, but at rare intervals, as if he were ashamed, or perhaps sorry for me, he would get up with a strange look on his face, and come back with me to the room which had witnessed so much felicity. But now his presence brought no longer any joy, and I felt—and he must have done so also—as if we were playing with the dead.

Your father was not exuberant, spontaneous, or passionate, like those who once had formed part of my life. Always reserved, few would have given him credit for depth of feeling. I seldom if ever had seen him give way to an outburst of anger or grief. To me only, he sometimes had unbent. In the bridal carriage from Montreux to Ouchy—I had need to remember these things, since I had to live—he had improvised and sung to me his song of love, and in after years had proved in acts and words that he worshipped me.

The world only knew him hard and undemonstrative, without any frailties. He was abstemious to a degree in

food and drink. He never indulged in display of any kind, cared neither for dress, society, people, nor any sort of amusement. Impervious to the small weaknesses which ask for a woman's indulgence, and make a man so lovable to some of us, weary of everything, he had now become tired of me.

And this man was my husband.

"I have other things to do," he would say. The words still sound in my ears. "I cannot be troubled. You know I only want to be left alone."

We now had visitors seldom, for I never invited anyone. I always hoped that seeing me so much alone, he would come to me. On his free afternoons, I again and again begged him to drive out with me.

"Why do you always want me with you, Eleonore? Can't you get someone else to go? I never see ladies driving constantly with their husbands. You have many friends. Why don't you ask them here? They will accompany you. I must not always be disturbed, I need rest."

They were always the same, almost the identical words.

At the beginning I had schooled myself to beg, where I felt I had a right to demand. I never have possessed the talent of asking with sweet words for what I consider my due; with flattery, to take my stand against injustice and harshness; and I feel sure my words sometimes sounded abrupt. Differently made, would I have better succeeded? But why ask myself, since already it was too late. Still I would linger, not to be vanquished by his calm and cruel speech, and would plead:

"Allan, you know I only want your company, the others weary me. I want you to come."

And he would grow irritated and reply:

"I do not understand why you are always so dissatis-

fied. I never interfere with you. You can do what you like. You have all the money you want. Why can't you leave me alone?"

And his eyes, which once had held so much love for me, looked hard and antagonistic, like those of an enemy.

I was not daunted, for beneath the proud spirit the heart was full of tears.

"You know that since I belong to you, I no longer care about others. Nobody in the world is anything to me, not even the children. It is you whom I want, only you, and the only real help you can give me is to give me yourself."

These were our conversations when we were alone. Bitter words soon followed, how bitter they were only he and I knew—but they came from me, not from him.

"You cut close to the bone," he would say, and look at me over his paper. I am sure I was bad-tempered, irritable, passionate; but a word from him would have changed my life, and for this word I was waiting.

Then he began to sulk. I had never seen him do such a thing before. Once he did not speak to me for six weeks. My birthday fell in the middle, and on that day also he spoke not one word. They were terrible days! I do not know which was worse, to sit side by side in the carriage, or be at home with the servants knowing that the Sahib never spoke to the Madam Sahib. When I begged him not to give us *en spectacle* to them he would say: "Who are they to bother about?" or not reply at all.

XXXI

"Quelques crimes toujours précèdent les grands crimes."

THE greatest sustaining power of love, child, lies in love's faith. I had been beaten all round, but I never doubted for a moment that I would win Allan back.

Suddenly, it was just before the beginning of the end of all things, I resolved to change my tactics. Your father had always possessed the power of making me feel, in any of our small differences, that I had been in the wrong. So now, in this much more serious one. I had been exacting, passionate, hard and bitter. I knew it was so. Now, by tender ways and small gentle acts, I would win him. He had often told me, and I knew he had once or twice said it even to others, that he could not resist me. So I tried all in my power to make myself irresistible.

For weeks—and only those who have tried to curb their nature in a great effort know how long weeks can be—I did all I could never by a word or gesture to refer to things which were forbidden subjects between us. The most unkind and selfish of his everyday acts—they were merely sins of omission, never of commission—I passed as natural. I did not ask him to do things I knew he preferred not to do. I lunched with friends, drove out with other men, entertained people at our house, and never infringed upon his bachelor habits, nor broke upon his privacy. He began to smile at me, and looked more at peace.

"I am pleased to see you are getting reasonable," he said one morning.

Pent-up feelings were asking to burst forth. I longed to say to him: "All this is only sham and meant to bring you back. I want you as much as ever." But I knew what the result would be—bitter words and a silence of weeks or perhaps months. So I only smiled at him.

Allan told me one morning that his pillows were uncomfortable, and asked me to have them seen to. The needs of India are, of course, different from those of Europe. I like a rather hard, springy pillow, and have slept on horsehair all my life. I at once cabled to Paris, and ordered the four most comfortable down pillows the French capital could produce. They arrived, and were delightful. Allan evidently appreciated them, but when I was undressing at night, his body-servant knocked at my door, and asked my maid to hand him out the pillows to put on the Sahib's bed! This happened every night.

Rosette was my maid then, a very different woman from Louise, who had served me so devotedly. A love adventure and a wife neglected would have seemed to this Parisian abigail, as to most of her caste, only an everyday occurrence; but a wife set aside by a husband leading the most regular of lives, assuredly betrayed great incapacity. Though she never dared to show it openly, there had come into her manner a slight disrespect, a kind of familiarity, or should I not rather say, a certain commiseration, which was like wormwood to my proud, wounded spirit. Sometimes I thought she smiled disdainfully as she handed over the two pillows.

Your father's body-servant and one of the *chuprassis* always waited, squatting on the veranda, until he

shouted to them to put out the lights and shut up the house. Only then could they take their bath and eat their dinner. Thus it happened that one night, when the tide was very low and the air so still that the only sounds around me were the flapping of the bats' wings outside, or the slight stir of a night insect, that I could hear Donu, your father's devoted bearer—who had greeted me as a bride, received Montfort from his master's arms, and accompanied you on your daily walks for years—discussing with Rama, the *chuprassi*, the most intimate details of our married life in the blandest possible manner.

I feel sure there was no malicious or evil thought in their minds. I have often heard Hindus discussing questions which at first greatly shocked me, for they consider what we have made mysteries and most complicated problems as the simple, natural, everyday functions they really are. The night was very hot and airless, the servants hungry and sleepy after their day's work. I heard them wondering how long the Sahib would keep them waiting, "since the pillows had been fetched and put into his bed, and he was not going that night to the Lady Sahib."

I have always pretended, tried to deceive myself, and declared I did not mind what people thought or said of me. In younger days I often quoted: "*le qu'en dira-t-on n'inquiète pas le sage*," but if this saying is true, I certainly am a great fool, for all through life I have cared tremendously about the judgment of others. "*Pauvre petite*," my mother used to say, and yet how like her I was, for to her sensitive spirit also a rude word from a man in the street would spoil the whole day. Unfortunately I have not grown wiser with years, and suffer daily because I do not possess this "*autre*

cœur que la nature donne à ceux qu'elle préfère et destine à vieillir." Mine is a very ordinary heart, and feels *comme jadis à vingt ans*.

"Eleonore will be happier all day, if she knows the chimney-sweep has looked kindly at her," Allan used to say, and he was right. There is a man who stands at the corner of my street to-day, to whom I sometimes give pennies, for I have no longer *des pièces blanches à donner*. But I should feel troubled if I did not keep him well supplied, and he no longer touched his hat when I pass.

These comments of my servants covered me with shame, I was still so impulsive and young. I felt I must jump out of bed and tell them . . . but tell them what? And my heart grew more bitter than ever against your father, who had exposed me to what I—imbued with the spirit and ideas of the West—considered the deepest of humiliations. So I determined then and there it should never happen again.

I am changeable about details, but when once I have decided upon a thing, not the effort of a whole town—and I speak here of a fact—would make me waver from my purpose; for money has no attraction, and fear no power over me. Once my spirit is bent towards an aim, no one except your father, child, ever swayed me, and I like to remember that after ten years, during which he was my lover, he said to me: "You never have done anything, Eleonore, I would have wished you to do differently."

I should perhaps have shown more patience, more forbearance. . . . But I had grown tired of sorrow itself. Now I was the object of derision of my servants! My spirit rebelled against further humiliations, and I resolved not to humour him any longer.

.

On the following evening, when Rosette was on the point of leaving me, there was a knock at the door.

"Tell Donu to come afterwards," I said, and when he had gone, and she still lingered, "I shall no longer require you, good night."

You know that each of the bedrooms of our Indian home not only opened upon the front, but also communicated by way of the dressing-room with the back veranda. Mine was farthest from the porch, and so as to ensure my privacy, the servants had strictest orders never to approach the part of the garden surrounding my rooms unless they knew that I was out or engaged somewhere else. Nor were they permitted to come through the front veranda by the small trellised gate which separated my part of the house from the rest. The door between my dressing-room and bedroom was open, like the others, day and night, but the one leading to your father's apartments was closed, and never gave passage save to him or me.

After Rosette had gone, I put on a *négligé*, took a book and sat on the couch which stood in the middle of the dressing-room. Soon there was another knock at the door dividing my part of the back veranda from that of your father. I got up and opened it.

"Tell the Sahib that I cannot give him the *gadis*," and so that he should not guess anything: "He can have them another time. I need them to-night, I am not very well."

I heard Allan's voice calling for the servants. There was a conversation in the next room—then all was still.

My dressing-room was brightly lit by the lamp, but my bed only shone dimly in the semi-obscurity of the next room. Suddenly there was a click as if the latch of the gate was lifted, a red-turbaned head shone through

the mosquito-curtains, and a brown hand grasped at something. I got up.

"What are you doing here? Leave that alone at once," I said to the bearer. "How dare you enter my room without first asking my permission? And how did you know I was not asleep?"

"I saw that Madame Sahib was dressed and still reading."

At once I understood that he had been sent by your father and had spied upon me in the dark.

The bearer had tucked the mosquito-curtains in again, and stood before me with empty hands. His voice trembled, he was afraid, for he knew that there were things I did not trifle with.

I went to the safe and took out my revolver.

"If you or any of the men ever dare to enter my room again by day or night without my permission, I will use this," I said, and showed him the weapon. Then, putting it back in its place, I added:

"Now go, and tell your master that if he wants the *gadis*, to be so kind as to fetch them himself. He knows I will not have you in my bedroom."

I went back, lit another cigarette, and took up my book again.

The door opened, and Allan entered in his pyjamas. I did not move. I put my book beside me, and looked at him.

"What is this now? And why do you not want to give up the pillows?"

"Because I am tired of it all. Why do you send the servants at night to spy upon my movements from the back of the house? Can you not come to me yourself when you want to know what I am doing? How do you dare send them into my room when I am there? Have

you not put enough shame and indignity into my life?"

I stood looking at him as if I must read my answer in his face.

"Stop all that nonsense," he said. "I have had enough of it. I have come myself to fetch the pillows and I shall have them."

He stepped forward, I following him. We stood together where once the altar of our love had been.

"You will not touch my bed," I said. "It would have been far better for me to have lain all through life at the wayside, for the passer-by to do with me as he wished, then ever to have shared it with you."

He was on the point of taking the pillows out. I came closer to him.

"You will not take them," I said.

"And who will prevent me?"

"I."

This was all I could say. There was a sharp thrilling pain. He had dealt me two blows with all his force.

I did not move, expecting to receive another. He receded a few steps, I instinctively following him, until we were standing together in the doorway leading to the dressing-room.

He was as pale as death, and I almost stunned. My face tingled with pain; but, absolutely mistress of myself, I opened my outstretched hands, as if offering them to him in sacrifice, and said:

"Here are my two hands, Allan. I might easily strike you back, but I will not defile them. You are the father of my children."

He went to the couch and sat down, I standing before him.

"At last you have found your master," he said.

"My master? No," I replied. "Brute force will never vanquish me. You are now my master less than ever."

XXXII

To strike a woman—the wife, the mother—is a profanation, a murder, a crime against nature.

My first thought was naturally to kill myself. To die seems often not merely the best, but the only solution. With my disdain for life, and even a secret wish to escape from it, I had contemplated death seriously for the first time when my darling mother died, though then already I had understood that death is not a simple thing, nor do people die so easily. All through life I have been haunted by this desire, but invariably a quarter of an hour's calm reflection made me again realise, and each time more strongly, what a beautiful thing life is after all. So it was then.

Every sorrow is destructive, either of our faults or our virtues. In the long night of desolation which followed the violent transgression against my honour, I resolved that the anguish which was sweeping over my life should eradicate those failings of character in me, which were due to too luxurious a life and slothful habits.

My thoughts again turned towards the past, asking from it help for that hour. Already I had realised that most things are worn out by everyday wear and tear, that knowledge takes away the halo of what we hold dear, and that we spend the rest of our lives mourning over it; but I had always believed that great things die of a sudden death. The oak falls, cut down by lightning.

It is the reeds by the river which rock to and fro, heedless of the storms. I called love back to inspire me with fortitude for the present. I did not understand—it was better so perhaps—that already it was irretrievably lost. Even smarting under the insult, how could I believe it, for I had known all the ineffable joys of love now for so many years. But can I truthfully say what I felt then? Can I explain why I breathe, move, live? I believe that even then, love still formed part of my being. I had set it so high, that in the olden days I wished a herald might step before me, to tell those around me of the great treasure which was in my heart. Allan was now a stranger, my enemy, I said; but in my inmost heart I still held high the banner of love, though I felt that I also had duties towards myself. In that night, for the first time, I separated my lover, my only friend, from the husband who had cruelly assaulted and wronged me.

What we have agreed to call self-respect is a mere word where the heart loves. Even in that hour I began to bargain with my passionate, rebellious spirit. "Remember what is due to you. There is only one thing possible now, you must leave him," it said; but I longed for my love from whose hands, as I knew, I would have accepted death. In the morning I had decided that I must hold out my hand to him and say that if he wished, I would forgive him for our children's sake.

At dawn I wrote to your father and when the *Hamal* opened the house I told him to take the letter to his master with his *chota-hazri*. I was disfigured, as you may understand, and too ashamed to show my face even to the servants. I felt grateful that they never by a word or a gesture betrayed that they guessed what had happened.

I told your father that for your sweet sakes I would forgive the wrong he had done.

"Tell Madame Sahib there is no reply," was the message the servant brought back to me.

When your father had gone to his office, I felt I must see someone. I had few real friends, and the women I liked best were all married. I could have borne their knowing about it; but that one of their husbands, my partners at balls, dinners or riding-parties, should hear of my disgrace would have killed me, I believe, for very shame. So I sent for Dr. Linder, who had brought Montfort into the world. I remembered how he had sympathised and understood me even then; I was suffering agonies, the heat was awful, the punkahs were not yet up, and not being a Queen of France no man could be admitted into the room to fan me. All through the pains I heard the creaking of your father's boots on the veranda. The nurse asked him not to make such a noise, but he evidently did not fathom what it meant to give a child to the world, for he continued. Suddenly I heard Dr. Linder's voice: "Man, do you not understand what that child is suffering?" I could not hear what Allan replied. "Take them off at once. What does it matter if you go barefoot?" Dear, clever old doctor, whose very presence always brought such comfort.

After an hour the canary-yellow brougham with the men in light blue livery and a pair of horses drove through the gate.

"Hallo! have you been thrown from your horse?" he asked when he entered the room.

"No," I said, "my husband struck me, and these are the marks."

I told him about the night before, also that I had written to Allan, and how for the children's sake, I felt

it my duty to forgive, if he sought for a reconciliation.

"What you have done is useless." The kind, grave eyes looked at me, as if they foresaw the future. "Send him a summons. That will bring him back to his senses."

From the point of view of expediency it may be regrettable that in the arena, where I have had to take my stand, I have not been able to compete with vulgarity, treachery and meanness; *mais que faire*, since it was impossible, and after all, during the long hours of life which is so short, one has to live in one's own company. The idea of the law had sprung up before me, among a thousand others, during the night; but the mere thought of it had frightened me, and Dr. Linder's suggestion seemed utterly impossible. How could he and I meet in a police court where the *dhobi* sued his master for arrears of wages, and the coolie's wife her husband for having cut off her nose—though my face was disfigured enough to evoke the magistrate's sympathy. A good general decides what he is going to do if he loses the battle, not if he wins it; but even at that hour I could not contemplate anything else but Allan coming back and loving me more than ever to make me forget.

"I have known your husband for the last twenty-four years and understand him far better than you do. Act as I tell you. Nothing else in the world will bring him to your feet. I am afraid though you will not listen, and regret it ever afterwards," so the doctor said as he left me, and I have never forgotten his words.

I remained three whole days in my room. Your father breakfasted and dined alone. At night the lamp burned on the veranda, and in the small hours I heard

him enter his room. On the fourth day from earliest dawn I hoped that the sound of each of his footsteps was bringing him to me; but he never came. At last I saw the brougham drive past my open doors to turn round and wait under the porch, heard the servants running about with their master's hat and stick, the papers and luncheon-basket to put into the carriage. He came from the dining-room into his room, as he was in the habit of doing. I had always accompanied him, so as to have every moment of his company, and we had often lingered together and lost account of time. He stepped out, I heard him giving an order to the butler on the veranda, and his voice sounded distant, as if he were going towards the porch. Would he again leave me without one single word? Was everything lost?

I came out of my room and went down the steps. He was already in the brougham. Thus we met again for the first time. I still wonder what he must have thought of my face.

"Allan, I am only waiting for a word from you. You cannot go away like this. You cannot goad me on to do desperate things. For our love's sake, for pity's sake, say that one word to me, and let us be again friends."

"You can do what you like," he replied, then "*challao*," giving the coachman the order to drive on.

I went to see Mr. Talwin, the husband of a friend of mine, the only woman who remained true to me in my misfortunes. They had often dined with us, and I had noticed that he was shy and of a very retiring disposition. I knew also that he was a brilliant counsel, and had won great cases. I told him my story.

"I cannot believe it," he said when I had finished.

Then when I lifted my thick veil and showed him my face. "I am sorry for you. Have you a witness?"

"No, fortunately we were alone."

"You will have a very hard position in law, for your husband will naturally deny everything. I am sorry I cannot help you, it is against etiquette. The case must go through a solicitor."

I told him that I had been advised to take out a summons, and that my face would speak for itself.

"Surely you do not want to ruin your husband!" he exclaimed.

I then called upon Mr. Trantham, the solicitor, whom I knew slightly, but whose open, honest face I had liked in the hunting-field, and told him about the dishonour which had come to me.

"You must not be so upset about it," he said, evidently with the idea of consoling me. "That's nothing. Every English lord beats his wife. The marks will go away. Don't trouble so. I will call upon your husband myself at his office, and keep the matter from the clerks. I shall let you know to-morrow."

The next morning before breakfast Mr. Trantham was announced. He passed your father's room and came to my boudoir.

"I saw your husband as I promised yesterday. He denies everything and is awfully mean about money. There is no difficulty about the separation. He has asked me to draw up a deed at once, and says he will also take a solicitor. But you cannot live upon the sum he offers."

"What did he say about the children?" I asked, for this was the only thing which at that moment mattered to me.

"You have two sons and a girl, is it not so? Well,

the children are his according to law. He at once said we need not discuss the matter, but I understand your daughter is still young. We might hold out for her."

"How can you speak like that? The children are mine, all of them. I cannot give up my children; and no one in the world has the power to make me. What would be left were they taken away?"

"I am sorry, but in law the woman always goes to the wall. I can only repeat to you that he is not at all generous about money, and that the children are legally his. You will easily understand that it would be to my firm's interest to urge you on; but take my advice as a friend, and try to make it up."

I felt so utterly bewildered when he left me, that it seemed as if the world had come to an end. I had never contemplated for one single moment losing you, for you belonged to me. The most gentle part of me has always been my love for you three. I never have been interested in the children of others, but only in you—my own. I believe I love you so because I bore you, because my spirit lived with you even before you came, because physically I feel you part of myself. Ever since I lost you, it has seemed to me as if one of my limbs had been amputated.

I was at that time very ignorant about law, which is made by man for man, and against woman. I have learnt many things since then. Law is not justice, but a mere contrivance which always crushes the weak, and where, even for the strong, victory too often resembles defeat. My bruised body and spirit prevented me from confessing at that hour, even to myself, that I did not want a separation, and my love for you, my children, had become intensified by the mere fear of losing you.

Without making up my mind to take the solicitor's

advice, I went into the drawing-room a little after your father arrived in the evening. I found him there outstretched on his long chair, the lamp beside him. He was reading, and did not look up.

"Good evening," I said when I entered.

There was no reply.

A few moments afterwards the gong sounded, and the table servants opened the screen doors which led to the dining-room. The butler came in and announced "*Kana tiar hai*."

Your father looked up from his paper:

"Serve dinner to Madame Sahib, and tell me when she has finished. I shall always dine after her."

I took my dinner alone that night and many more.

On a Sunday Allan would take out the carriage and horses reserved for my special use, and leave me alone for the whole day, breakfasting and dining at the club. His separate dinners soon ceased. After a few days the brougham would return while I sat at dinner and I could hear the coachman in the compound say that he had orders to fetch his master later on. Late at night, often towards morning, the wheels of the brougham crunching the gravel would wake me. I heard him moving in the room next to mine. Then all was still.

It had seemed impossible, and yet a presentiment had prompted me at times to imagine how I should feel if misfortune should surprise me. I sometimes had fancied—secure as I felt in his love—how it would be if ever we should be parted. Great God! how well I have experienced it.

I never went out except for my solitary drive in the afternoon. I paid no calls, the *chuprassi* had orders to say "*bar gais*" to those who came. I would sometimes take you in my arms, and you looked sadly at me, be-

cause you knew that *petite mère* was troubled—but you never spoke of your father, nor did I. You seemed to understand that something was not right, and I found it impossible to pretend. It still makes me feel sad when I have to remember that you also suffered. It was then that we began to study la Fontaine's fables, and it was a great relief to both of us.

After four weeks of this terrible life I wrote to Polly, telling her of all that had happened. I wondered what she, with her religious views, would say of her brother's conduct. I also asked her to send me news of my little sons, for I no longer saw their letters, and my heart was aching for tidings of them.

One evening I was sitting at dinner, thinking that my letter would reach her in a few days. Since the night when the flat had gone forth that I must always have my meals alone, be *en pénitence* like a child, almost seven weeks had passed. I was alone at the large dining-table in the brilliantly lit room, just beginning dinner, when your father's brougham slowly entered the gate.

I was thinking of Mr. Bandy, your father's friend, with whom he was now dining; for though I never inquired, I knew where he spent his evenings. The man had called that morning, and at first I had hesitated whether to receive him. In his most insinuating manner, he had told me how much he regretted that a misunderstanding had arisen, and offered his services as mediator.

"I cannot discuss the matter with you," I had said, not wishing with that man above all others who was keeping my husband away from me, to mention the real cause of our estrangement.

"You may be sure I feel sorry for both you and Mr.

Montrose, who is my friend. Is there nothing I can do for you?"

"Absolutely nothing," I replied.

"There are always differences," he continued, "between husband and wife." His own young wife, as I knew at the time, had refused to live with him and was staying in Europe with her people. "But will you not make it up? I know Mr. Montrose thinks very highly of you. If I arrange a dinner, would you come to my house? You would meet then, and matters would right themselves."

"Only my husband and I know what lies between us. Strangers cannot set it right," I had told him, and he had gone.

All this passed again through my mind as I sat there alone.

"Order the carriage at once," I said to the butler.

It came. I stepped in.

"Drive to Bandy Sahib's," I said.

XXXIII

THE house stood at a few minutes' drive from where we lived. The lights on the veranda were low, and I understood that the Sahibs were at dinner.

When I alighted, the servants came rushing up.

"Give Bandy Sahib my salaam," I said; but news in India travels at times in an almost miraculous way. He stood beside me, welcoming me with his broadest smile and most flowery speech.

"I have come to speak to my husband, here in your presence. Will you take me to him?"

"We are at dinner. Do come in and have some with us. There will be lots of time afterwards for us to talk."

He led me to the dining-room, but Allan had disappeared. When Mr. Bandy brought him back, and he sat down opposite me in his white club jacket, I suddenly realised what I had come to do.

All through the dinner Mr. Bandy and I talked incessantly together. No one would have guessed how my whole being was on the rack, and how great the effort was not to show that I trembled; but I managed to keep my countenance *comme si de rien n'était*. Allan sat mute. He said not one word, nor did he even glance at me. After a time I gathered up my courage and looked at him, but his eyes were fixed on his plate. I felt all the better for having taken dinner, but I was glad when at last it came to an end.

Your father rose, and was about to go:

"I had better leave you two alone," he said.

"No, you don't," exclaimed Mr. Bandy. "You stay here. We must both go with Mrs. Montrose to the veranda, and hear what she has come to tell us."

We sat down all three. I have known in life moments of exaltation when all my surroundings disappeared; when, as if impelled by a will stronger than my own, I have gone blindly towards my aim; when nothing and no one could have stopped me. So it was now.

I began to speak to your father. If the whole of the town had been there listening, it would have been the same to me. I told him how, since my last home-coming, he had changed towards me. I spoke of his indifference, of his neglect, and how, to crown it all, he had for

a mere ebullition of temper, even taking things at their worst, behaved towards me as no man does towards the woman he once loved, towards the woman he at least must respect since she is the mother of his children. Before Mr. Bandy I said how he had struck me, and how, instead of coming back to me as I had implored him to do, implored him because I still loved him, he had goaded me on to do desperate things, had not merely denied the hurt done to me, but when I had taken advantage of such means as offered themselves to me, means which were the only ones left, he had resented it, cut himself off from me entirely, and condemned me to live the most terrible of lives.

No one interrupted me. No one spoke. I continued:

"Now, Allan, if there is a single word of untruth in what I reproach you with, here is your chance, say it now. You have denied it to others. Now say if it is I who speak the truth or if it is you. Have you struck me or not?"

There was still no reply.

Mr. Bandy got up and went to your father. He said a few words to him in a low tone, so that they did not reach me. Then speaking louder and turning to me: "I am certain you speak the truth."

And then to Allan: "Now go and kiss her and tell her you are sorry."

Your father got up and kissed me.

.

When we were driving back, I at his side as in the days of old, he put his arm round me.

"Do you not understand, Eleonore, that for your sake I had to deny it? No one would have believed that I had done such a thing for no reason whatever. I had

to protect you. I do not wish people to think ill of you."

"This is the first untruth which has ever stood between us. I do not understand, but no doubt you are right." Then taking the hand which had struck me and kissing it: "You see everything is forgiven, and soon will be forgotten, but oh! Allan, never again let there be a lie, and never again let us be parted."

I was governed by the moment, dear little daughter, as most of us are. I cannot tell if really I should have been able to forget in the years to come. All I remember is that I believed we both intended to take up life together again, and honestly meant to bear my share of it, and do all in my power to make him happy.

This I told your father, nestling close to him as we drove along, after he had said how deeply he regretted what he had done, how he cursed the mad impulse, and how he would love me all the more tenderly, more truly also henceforth, so as to wipe away even the least memory of those unfortunate days.

When we reached the bungalow, it was brightly lit and illuminated with Chinese lanterns. News had travelled fast!—and the servants were desirous of proving to us how happy they were that the Sahib was again "friends" with the Madam Sahib. It had been a bad time for them also.

"Allan," I said the following morning, "do not be annoyed, but I wrote to Polly about the sad thing which happened. Two days are still left before my letter reaches Scotland. Will you cable, and ask her to return it unopened to me?"

"That is all right, Eleonore. Never you trouble. I do not mind your having written. Only you and I count. They are of no importance whatever, and have

merely to do what I tell them. If it is a satisfaction to you, I will make Polly disgorge the letter. I am sure she will not read it, if I tell her not to."

I asked to see the communications which had come during the last seven weeks from Edinburgh, for my heart was longing for tidings of your brothers; but your father seemed very reluctant, and made many excuses.

"To-night as we drive home I will tell you every single word they contain. There is no need for you to trouble about the children. They are first-rate. I shall show you the letters some other time," he added. "Trust me."

"We will never again touch upon the melancholy subject, Allan. I am sure it was all my fault, and that I riled you. Only this. Tell me, did you write to them about it?"

"No, surely not. What makes you think so? You know I am not in the habit of confiding in others. Set your mind at rest as to that. They have nothing to do between you and me."

I trusted him.

There followed an exquisite month. Your father, as if by a miracle, had been given back to me. He had never been more demonstrative, more lavish in delicate attentions. At times my happiness seemed too great to be true.

"Are you quite happy now? Are you quite sure of me?" he asked me often. And I would reply:

"I trust you. Surely nothing will ever grieve us again," and beside him, under the spell of love, all vague fears went to rest. I was once again as happy as I never would have believed it possible.

I was full of hope, my own child, but hope even at its best is fearful, and the greatest curse of sorrow is that it

takes from us the trust in the future, that we no longer look upon people and things in the same way as we did before; though I confess that my faith had to die a hard death. Sometimes—these things cannot be explained—without any reason, during those weeks of happiness, doubts would come if Allan had really told me the truth about his people, for he never brought me the letters as he had promised; but I never allowed myself to dwell upon the thought.

Since our reunion we rarely touched, and then only *à mots couverts*, upon the suffering which for almost two months had so sorely oppressed me. I had promised not merely to forgive, but to forget. His pride also had been lowered. Having done wrong, he must suffer even more than I. It was my duty to soothe and inspire him with courage, not to remember and upbraid. "Above all, try and forget," I incessantly repeated to myself; "else how can you live?"

My darling mother had instilled into me her loathing for crooked ways, and I abhor lies. Three Mondays passed, on each of which he told me that Polly was ill and unable to write, but his father had cabled that all was going on well. It was the monsoon, and the mail was often late. One morning at dawn I heard the cannon.

"There is the boat, Allan. How I am longing for news of our darlings. The *peon* will be here with the letters in an hour. You do not think they would keep them at your office? A whole eternity lies between now and when you will be there."

"I gave orders yesterday that they were to be brought up. Do not trouble, darling. Just let us go to sleep again."

No letters were there in the morning and Allan left

me, promising that if there were any, which, however, he did not think for one minute—as he had given strict orders to have them brought up—he would send them at once by the coachman. As soon as your father had gone, I thought I would see for myself.

When I arrived at his office, the brougham was just leaving it, and the driver handed me a note from Allan enclosing mine to Polly. He told me in this note that again no other letters but this had come. So he had cabled to inquire after our darlings, and would send up the reply by runner, as soon as it reached him. Many assurances of his love accompanied this explanation, and how he was looking forward to meeting me in the evening.

I left the carriage and went upstairs into his office. He was reading his people's letters. They were spread around him, for the whole family had united to tell him that your Aunt Sophia had a child. He welcomed me with this piece of news.

"That is a detail," I said. "I want to see the letters, and what they say about me. I thought there were none."

He was so taken aback that he said not a word. I took up Polly's epistle which was beside him. Coming up the staircase I had noticed that mine to her had been opened, but clumsily fastened again.

"She has read my letter," I said. "Now let me see what she tells you."

Never before, never again, did I read such odious cant, such lamentable treachery. She reminded your father that from the very first she had warned him against me. I ascertained afterwards that, as soon as I consulted Mr. Trantham, your father had written to his people, and at once understood that this was not the

first letter on the subject, but that similar ones had preceded it. Polly was full of the news about her sister. The hideous insult done to me was merely touched upon.

"Her story is an untruth, of course. We know, dearest brother, you would never do such a thing, but what can you expect from *her?*" This was to be my appellation henceforth, though it sometimes varied with *she*. "In any case," Polly added, "you can only have done the right thing."

Her father's letter was still more full of *bodenloser Dummheit*. In later years when I remembered, it made me laugh aloud, for

" . . . wenn das Herz im Liebe ist zerrissen und zerschnitten
und zerstoehen
So bleibt uns doch das schöne grelle Lachen."

as my friend Heine says.

Your grandfather "considered chastisement permissible, and if inflicted, without doubt deserved." Those words, and many others, exasperated me. It was clear, Allan had written to forewarn them fearing I might write; but denying the act itself. What fools those people must have been to accept, even for one single moment, the possibility that I would confess to such an indignity, had it not been true.

The letter wound up with the contemplated christening of the "Child of Prayer," and like Polly, he dwelt at length on the present "which, if sent by next mail, would reach them in time, and would give pleasure, especially if in silver." I read the letters, all, every word. I then looked at your father, handed them back to him, and left the room. Not one word had passed between us.

In the evening we met, but neither of us referred to the morning. I have no doubt he knew what I thought, for my eyes had told him.

Two or three days after that your father developed symptoms of diphtheria. It was the first time in all those years he had been seriously ill. Our kind old doctor spoke about contagion and nurses to take my place, but I would not hear about it. He was in great danger. I sometimes wished he might die and I go with him, but my good care, as Dr. Linder said, saved him. His convalescence was rapid, but soon I began to notice that he looked upon me as a stranger, though he was too weak yet to be unkind. I sometimes wondered if he was glad that his life had been preserved; but we never spoke of such things, only about common ordinary topics.

"You had better go for a trip to Europe, and take your wife with you. It will do her as much good as you; you both need it," the doctor had said when he pronounced his patient cured.

I did not wish to broach the subject, I hoped Allan would do so. Of late I had been anxious to take you there, but did not think your father would accompany us. As he had been so ill, I considered it my duty to remain with him. Almost two years had gone since I had seen my darlings. I was longing for them, especially for Laurent. Did he sometimes think of me, and how we had parted?

"I believe the doctor is right, Eleonore. A change will do me good, and I wish to see how the boys are getting on. I shall take three months' privilege leave, and will be back soon."

"You do not intend to go to Europe without me? Reine and I will come with you. We both need a

change, and I would rather go with you than to the hills."

"I only spoke of it as a possibility. After all I had better stick to my work. You can go if you like. Only promise me that you will not take the children from my people and upset them."

I told him that if I went to Europe I should naturally have my darlings to live with me, and as the school pleased me, I would stay near it, until he joined us for their long holidays. We might then go to the Highlands together, where I never yet had been. Allan generally cared too little about things to insist. This time he did so, repeating again and again that he would never give his consent to any change in the present arrangements.

We did not allude to this point again, any more than to all the others which had arisen since I had read his people's letters. They were making day by day the breach greater between us. He now refused to let me see their weekly communications. I tried to persuade myself that it was better so, and only saved me further insult; but my heart was very sad at having no news from your brothers. I wrote to Mrs. Powell, the dear, kind sister of the Principal of their school. My inquiry having been guarded, her reply, though kind, was full of reticences, and not appreciative enough of my little men, I thought. I longed more than ever to go to Europe and see for myself, but your father formally opposed my wish.

XXXIV

As I was driving one evening along the sea face with you beside me, someone beckoned to the coachman. He turned round and asked if he might stop.

It was our native landlord on his way to the bungalow.

"Montrose Sahib asked me to tell you he is not coming back. A letter is waiting for you at home."

You understand that the news came like a thunderbolt. Such a message, and sent in such a manner! I never knew until then that it was possible for a husband, a father, to desert wife and child, and go on as if nothing had happened. For one instant I felt bewildered from this *coup de massue*, but I am always calmest in most desperate moments. My first thought was that I could not discuss such a thing with our landlord. There was also you to think of. Your large brown eyes—dear eyes, are they still so full of expression?—looked at me as if in fear. I never knew, for I never could ask you, if you understood what was said that day.

I turned towards the man and said smilingly:

"You are very kind to have taken all this trouble to bring me the message. I shall find the letter when I go back. You will excuse me, but I have to drive on." And bowing to him, I said, "*challao*" to the coachman.

I then took you to the French confectioner's and bought you the chocolates of which you were so fond. After that we went to the bandstand and listened to the music. You were sweeter and more loving that night

than ever, but perhaps it is only because I remember just that time. You put your little arm into mine and smiled at me, and wanted to know if I had been a happy little girl, and if my mother had petted me, as I did you; but you never asked if *petite mère avait du chagrin*, because you knew it.

When we reached home, before handing you to your nurse, I took you in my arms, and kissed you again and again, then went to my room. On the dressing-table before the couch there was a letter sealed with your father's ring.

"Put my money and the letter in the safe," I said to Rosette. And when she had handed me the key, "Now dress me for dinner."

Servants in India are not in the habit of asking questions, at least ours were not. Moreover they had been accustomed of late to your father's prolonged absences, by day and by night; so at first it made no difference.

I suffered horribly, but something insidious had come and added itself to grief—a kind of contempt that Allan had done such a mean thing as to run away. I believe that from the very beginning this feeling helped me to get over his desertion. I did not read the letter. I did not look at it. I felt I could not even touch it. It lay in the drawer of my safe with the large red seal, as on the evening when it had been put there.

Once again I felt the desire for action. Early in the morning I would ride out, and gallop for miles on the sand as hard as my horse, who had been second for the Calcutta Cup, would go. Sometimes I would vie with the rising tide to see which of us two was the faster. It seems childish now to tell you that it overtook me once, and that we had a very narrow shave, my racer and I. It was quite an accident, for I well remember that in

those days I had no wish to die. All through the shame that Allan had deserted me, set me aside like a useless thing which one shakes off, all through the desolation of my days and my nights, I felt at first a kind of relief that he had gone. During the day I had you always with me. Together we overhauled my chests, and I showed you all my pretty things. Much might happen, and I wanted everything to be straight, for I "had great possessions."

All this time I knew nothing of Allan. He had taken his brougham, and as the coachman, who lived with his wife on the compound, came home daily for his dinner, it would have been an easy thing to ascertain where he was; but I never once inquired. I knew.

Mr. Oldham, one of your father's friends, had always impressed me as a high-souled and honourable man. One day when I was "eating the air" in my carriage, a fortnight or so having gone, he came up to me. I knew that whatever I might tell him he would not repeat; but there was really very little to say, and this little I did not care to tell behind Allan's back. I felt it was impossible for anyone to understand our differences, so I told Mr. Oldham that we both had most irritable tempers, and this was why Allan had left me.

The reluctance with which I had stated the reasons of our estrangement evidently made a bad impression on him. He looked very dubious.

"But what are you going to do? What arrangements has he made for you? And what about the little girl? How does she see her father?"

Buried in my grief, I confess I had not once thought about you in relation with him. Nor had he ever inquired or sent for you.

"I had a letter the same day the landlord brought me

the news. I never have opened it. Somehow I could not. But perhaps it contains something about Reine."

"Your husband is my friend. I must go and see him. There may be differences between you about which I know nothing. I do not ask questions. I hope matters can still be arranged, and that he will come back to you."

"I wish he knew that I have not opened his letter."

"I shall tell him. I only heard the news this morning when I came back from Amraoti. Will you be here to-morrow? I would like to tell you what he says. You are alone. So I had better not come and see you."

On the following day, at the appointed time, I met Mr. Oldham.

"I can do nothing with him, and have told him he is no longer my friend. I must be frank with you, you will forgive me, brutally frank, but I believed there was a man in the question."

"I wish there were," I said, "one friend in the world to whom I could turn."

"You must not speak like that," continued Mr. Oldham. "Your only strength lies in the fact that there is no such thing. As soon as I saw him I asked him."

"And what did he reply?" I wondered if Allan might have assented to this odious accusation, to justify himself in the eyes of others.

"What he said annoyed me most," replied Mr. Oldham; "though for your sake I am pleased. He said, 'There is no man but me in the world for her; she is as pure as the untrodden snow on the mountaintop.'"

"It is my temper which has driven him away. I really never knew until lately that I had one at all. My temper drove him away," I repeated, for I knew how unhappy we had been.

"Great Heavens! That's what he said, but a man doesn't desert his wife for her temper! I told him he could not brave public opinion, he must come back to you. He said he did not care. When I told him it was impossible for man or woman to be a law unto himself, he replied: 'I hold the whole lot in my hands. They cannot afford to quarrel with me.'"

"Did you tell him about the letter?" I asked. "And that I have never read it?"

"He says he does not believe it. I found he was living with that fellow Bandy. What on earth can Montrose see in him? He is not even a gentleman."

"You may well ask," I replied.

When I reached home that evening, I took the letter out of the safe and sent it to Mr. Oldham. He acknowledged it next day and told me that he had forwarded it by registered post—not wishing to hand it personally to Allan.

One evening towards dusk I was sitting alone on the veranda when I heard the noise of horses' hoofs on the road leading to our house. Who could call upon me at this time of the day? Perhaps it was Allan? Oh! if it were he coming back to me! I was easily moved then—in fact I still am so.

When the carriage stopped under the porch the *chuprassi* brought me Mrs. Martineau's card. This lady had learnt of my sorrow.

She possessed the most engaging manner. To listen to her was to believe that you were the only being in the world who counted, and that she was there merely to attend to yourself, the one object of her interest and most tender care.

It was her duty to come. Each of the members of

her circle of friends was sorry. They all wondered how they might help me. She was sent to tell me so.

"I am sure if Lord Vernon tells your husband he must come back, there is nothing left for him but to return," she said after I had touched upon our incompatibility of temper, taking the larger part of the blame upon myself, for I knew very well that my words had been hard and bitter, whilst your father had said little.

Again and again she repeated that she would consult her friends and write to your father. There was not the least doubt they would set matters right.

"But where is he staying?" she asked me. "I do not wish to write to his office. It is likely, too, that Lord Vernon will call upon him."

"I have never inquired where my husband stays, but I heard he was at Mr. Bandy's. I somehow feel sure he is still there."

"I shall let you know as soon as we have heard. Do not worry. All will come right soon."

Thus we parted, she leaving me somewhat comforted. When I entered your room I sent the nurse away and knelt beside your bed. I carefully lifted the mosquito-curtain, so that none of our little enemies might enter, and whispered softly to you that *petite mère* had come to give you a last good-night kiss, and that a great joy was coming to us. You did not ask if it was your father coming back, but put your little arms round my neck, and coaxingly asked me if just for once you might sleep with me in my bed. So I carried you there and laid you in myself. You were growing quite a big girl, almost nine years old.

Two days later I received a long letter from Mrs. Martineau telling me that her friends and she had arranged everything. Allan was coming back to us. But

would I give her the pleasure of coming over for lunch? She would be alone, and things were so much more easily discussed by word of mouth than by letter.

XXXV

"I too have come through wintry terrors and cataclysm of soul;
Have come and am deliver'd."

THE hours which follow stand out in my life distinct from all others. For one brief moment happiness and misery hung in the balance, were put into my hand to choose.

I have never regretted the choice which seemed then the only right one. To-day, beaten by every storm and wounded by every sting, I still rejoice that I acted as I did act; for, courage having remained faithful and my spirit undaunted, I know that, again called upon to decide, I still should choose as I then chose.

Under that "pale, proud face," as your father called it when we met for the last time, I have suffered though, suffered terribly—not less because I kept it to myself—and the hours I spent with Mrs. Martineau will always live with me in their smallest gloomy details.

I arrived early. Instead of taking me straight to her, the *chobdar* told me the Madame Sahib was very busy with the *Dhirzee*, and would I wait a few minutes. In the drawing-room I was surprised to find a *Sadhu* seated, for they are seldom admitted to such fashionable places. Like the Son of Man they "have not where to lay their head."

A well-trained Hindu servant is very tactful and ob-

servant. The butler, bowing low before me, whispered into my ear:

"It is all right, Madame Sahib. This *Sadhu* very big man, waiting for the Lord Sahib," whereupon he left us.

Of late I sometimes dread I may leave my message to you unfinished. I have to push away a thousand thoughts which throng round me, wanting to go to my child, but unless I am brief I shall never end my task. Still I must tell you about the *Sadhu*.

The ascetic had arrived that morning, and had never heard of me. The rest I cannot explain. Only those upon whom the East has cast its spell will, I do not say understand, but believe what I now tell you.

Sadhu have always attracted me, so I spoke to this one. He told me—the East is not so reticent as the West—that he was the son of a king, and from earliest youth had studied under a teacher during long years of fast and penance.

"I have never tasted woman or wine," he told me, and there was something in his bearing and an expression on his face which spoke of that spirituality which is only gained by soaring over matter, and being in touch with the Infinite.

"And what hast thou come for?" I asked him, our conversation being naturally in the vernacular.

"I came on business, to see about a very old temple which the Chief Commissioner Sahib in Bengal says must be pulled down. But my *yogi* lives close to it, and cannot be disturbed. The Lord Sahib has promised help."

He had risen, and we were standing talking together, when he suddenly said:

"You are in trouble, in far greater trouble than I.

But why have you come here where there is no help, and sorrow will only be made greater?"

I had lived too long in India not to know that some of these men have strange inexplicable powers.

"Can you read my hand?" I asked, holding it out to him.

He told me that the sorrow which at that moment overshadowed my life would never abandon me. "You will lose everything," he said. "I gave all willingly, but from you it will be taken by force."

"But my children?" I asked. "Surely they will be left to me?"

"Your children will betray you—all of them." And when I looked at him horror-stricken, "but this is a small thing. The disciple your great *Sadhu* Christ loved betrayed his master."

He must have seen how I suffered, for he continued: "You will no longer grieve if you cease to set your heart upon things of this world. Do as I did, and leave everything. God alone is great. In Him only there is happiness. Yet have courage. I see the end of your life crowned with peace and beauty. You will be a staff for many to lean upon."

I would have liked to ask the holy man many more questions, but at that moment the servant requested me "kindly to step up, for the Madame Sahib must see me alone."

I went the familiar way, with the *Sadhu's* words sounding like a knell. From the top of the staircase Mrs. Martineau's bright voice was saying:

"Oh excuse me for not having come down. I was afraid callers might be there, and I wished to have you all to myself, for I have such good news to tell you."

All forebodings vanished. Once again I lived in the present.

"And what does he say? Is he coming back to us?"

"It is useless to tell you all we have done. Your husband is not easily managed, as you must know for yourself. At last we have succeeded. He is coming back."

"When?" I interrupted. "Why has he not come already?" And fear again entered my heart.

"Do not be afraid. He is coming soon. At once, if you wish, but you must promise something."

"Promise?" I said. "And what?"

"That you will leave for Europe at once with your little daughter, and stay there until he joins you."

"That is the easiest thing in the world. I have wished to go away for a long time, and naturally I would not go without Reine. But what else is there?" for I read in Mrs. Martineau's face that this was not all.

"The rest is perhaps a little more difficult." It was generous of her to admit so much! "Your husband wants you to promise not to see your boys until he comes. He is most particular that you should not interfere with his present arrangements."

"Tell my husband that I shall never consent to this, never give an undertaking he has no right to exact. If these are his terms, I do not accept them, neither now nor at any other time. I love my children. They are mine, and nothing shall ever take them away from me."

Mrs. Martineau understood evidently from my indignation that none of her arguments would ever make me change. But she had to go through with the thing she had begun. I do not wish to hint at base motives—for those who are mortally struck are bad judges.

"Take my advice," she continued; "it is that of a

friend." Until then I had known her but slightly. "You need your husband at your side now more than ever. There are strange rumours afloat."

"I do not mind what people say. No one can reproach me with anything. What lies between my husband and me only touches us. The greater part of the fault may be on my side, but two are always needed to make a quarrel."

"It is nothing of that kind," she proceeded. "I did not wish to tell you for fear of annoying you, but I must do so now in your own interest, however painful it is for me, so that the knowledge may help you to do what Lord Vernon and I both advise."

"Tell me. Tell me at once. I am not afraid of the truth."

She then related that she had dined the previous night at the Annandales' house, where people naturally had been talking about Allan and me. Mrs. Annandale and Mrs. Brunton had said that your father had left me because I drank.

For the moment it almost annihilated me to think that at a dinner-party people who knew me intimately had openly accused me of such a base and loathsome thing as drinking to excess. My first thought went to your father. Surely he who was so proud of me, who still must love me—for love does not die in a day, but breaks forth anew and bears fruit under adversity—surely if he knew he would come back and protect me against such vile inventions.

"Did you tell my husband?" was all I could find to say. "Does he know about this disgraceful thing?"

"No, I could not tell him yet; it only happened last night."

"You had better let him know at once. There can

no longer be any conditions, he must protect me, his wife, the mother of his children. Those women only invented this to make me suffer more. Why do you even repeat such a thing to me, since you know it is a lie? No one believes it. A stranger looking only at my face would say it was pure invention."

At this moment the gong sounded, and we went down for lunch. All through the tiffin, Mrs. Martineau tried to persuade me to give the undertaking that I would not go and see your brothers, though she never again alluded to what she had heard the night before.

"Only promise," she said; "and it will be all right."

"My husband trusts me. All the more reason not to give a promise which I know I shall never keep. I have done nothing to forfeit my rights as a mother. I cannot barter my children for his coming back. It would be wrong towards them as well as towards myself. I can only go to Europe unconditionally. Tell him this from me, and tell him what you have heard at the Annandales'."

The next day by letter Mrs. Martineau again pressed me to accept your father's conditions; again she referred to the odious slander. We exchanged four or five letters. There is no doubt you have seen the correspondence. All her arguments were without avail. Her vague threats, insinuations, entreaties even that I should promise, were equally futile.

The longing for my darlings in Scotland was growing every day, and the thought that I might be prevented from seeing them made me more eager than ever. I was satisfied with their school, and as desirous as your father not to interrupt their studies. I wished above all not to irritate him further. At last I thought I had found the proper solution. I would go to the

children, and as it was not possible to stay at your grandfather's house, I wrote to Mrs. Powell, the Principal's sister, asking her if she would receive me and my sons as boarders, just for a little, until my husband came, and we could together make permanent arrangements. I referred to differences which stood between him and me.

Mrs. Powell's answer arrived, telling me that my sons needed their mother and better supervision. She was ready to receive us, so I began to make my plans and preparations for our going to Europe.

Things were dragging on. You were growing paler every day, and our kind doctor decided that you must go to Europe at once, and that he would tell your father. I also felt as if the air stifled me. All intermediaries having failed, I now wrote to Allan telling him that I had decided to stop this state of things which made a laughing-stock of us. I would take our passages at once, provided he gave me, as always before, an open credit on the Bank of England.

The same day I received his reply, wherein he explicitly agreed to my request. I wrote back to him fixing the day of our departure. When the carriage took you, *chérie*, and me to the steamer with your nurse and my maid, there was not one soul to bid us God-speed. On the boat people looked as if they felt sorry for us, but had not the courage to show it.

Before I left the bungalow, I took from my jewel-case a lock of your father's hair. He had sent it to me when he was not yet mine—a few days before the marriage. I then locked the casket in the safe, put the key in an envelope, and sent it to him. Under the diamond star I had put a small paper. On it was written:

"Ah, dear, but come thou back to me!
Whatever change the years have wrought,
I find not yet one lonely thought
That cries against my wish for thee."

XXXVI

As soon as we reached Europe, I took you to Madame de Saint-Jean, engaged a governess for you, dismissed Rosette, and set off for Scotland.

I see myself arriving there one morning early, driving through the lovely avenue of trees which surround the house, my heart beating wildly, for it was school-time, and in a few minutes I should see my sons.

The Principal, his sister and her husband received me most cordially, but were so cautious, that I seemed not to understand them. There was great reticence in their words, much mystery surrounded everything, and at first I felt lost. Dear, kind people! They were certainly very good and hospitable to open their house to a woman under a cloud—as I must have seemed to them. Many years have passed, but I still remember their kindness.

There was much talk about old Mr. Montrose, your grandfather, and his daughter Polly, who, as Mrs. Powell observed, seemed to hold the most important place in the household.

"Now that I am here, I do not intend to allow anyone to stand in my way. If they refuse to give up my children, I shall go and fetch them myself. And if you

think we shall give you too much trouble, dear Mrs. Powell, I shall take them to the hotel, and they can come daily to school; but I would have liked you to keep us all three. Where are they now? Are they not here? And why do they not come to me?"

"They are in the class-rooms, and looking forward very much to your arrival. I will call them at once. But let me tell you first that when your telegram arrived three days ago, fixing the hour of your coming, my brother went to see old Mr. Montrose. He was not able to arrange anything, Miss Montrose raised a thousand objections. So he went again yesterday to your father-in-law's office, and saw him alone. It is agreed that your boys remain with us until their father comes."

"I am ashamed to give you so much trouble," feeling it was too bad that I had dragged them into such unpleasant things. "Do you not think it would be better if I looked out somewhere else for quarters? Though I would love to stay with my boys in this charming home," I added.

They had, however, decided to be kind, and were not people to do things by halves. So Mrs. Powell told me they all adhered to what she had written; they would be happy to have me until things were more settled.

"We never knew there were such misunderstandings between you. When I first wrote I thought it was, as I told you then, merely a rift in the lute. This state of things is very sad for all concerned. My brother has arranged a meeting between you and your father-in-law to-night at my sister's house. There you can discuss details. But now let me go and fetch your boys. You must be wearying for them."

It was a great joy to have Montfort and Laurent in my arms again. They looked bright and happy, and

told me they had seen the cab enter the gate, and recognised the initials painted on my trunk. I wondered why they had not flown to me. Both seemed very happy to be again with "mother," and asked many questions about you, *chérie*; but, strangely enough, they never inquired after their father. Though they were at once full of attentions as of old, yet I felt there was a veil between us. I did not know how much Polly had dared to tell them, but I felt sure she had spoken.

The joy which filled my heart at having your brothers with me helped me to bear many things during the weeks which followed.

They did love their mother, those little sons of mine. Their kisses and caresses were not lies; they were fondly, passionately devoted to me. Why should I deny that it was once day, now that night surrounds me? It is good to remember that in those days there was no barrier between them and me, no shyness from me to them, which often makes parents feel nervous towards their children. They seemed to come to me in all their scrapes, confide in me, as only children do who love and trust their mother, feeling that she will understand and help them out of all their difficulties. I was sad at heart, very sad, and yet, if you can understand me, at the same time very, very happy. So were they.

Of what went on in the Montrose household I knew nothing. When Montfort went for his music lesson from Polly, he always came back strangely disturbed. Though I never asked him, I often wondered what had passed, and sometimes feared that she used the time to instil other things into my child's mind than music. Sometimes I would say: "And how did the lesson go to-day? Are you making great progress?" and Montfort would blush and scarcely reply. I have often

thought since then that she used the time to corrupt my child's soul.

I found out, though only much later and to my great grief, for I implicitly trusted my little sons, that all the time they were ransacking my drawers, even taking out letters. This hurt me, I believe, more than all the rest, although even now I cannot believe that they did this without the instigation of my enemies. I cannot admit, even to myself, that those children of mine were base by nature.

One day the Principal of the school told me—he could only have learnt it through them, who were as unfaithful to their grandfather and aunt as they were to me—that conventicles were held daily at Dunbar Place with a solicitor who had also questioned them. Mr. Anstruther begged me to take advice. It would bind me to nothing and might be helpful. So one Sunday the chief partner of a firm of solicitors called, and made it perfectly clear to me that according to Scotch law your father was the sole guardian of our children.

“Does such iniquity hold good,” I asked, “even if the husband deserts his wife merely to suit himself, and for no reason whatever? In any case is the mother not the guardian of her children if the father is prevented from having them in his own keeping?”

“He can always delegate his power to whomsoever he pleases, even if he is on the best of terms with his wife, or if incompatibility of temper is the cause of his desertion.” And when I looked aghast at him: “Your husband has the power to take the children from their mother, and give them into the custody of perfect strangers. This is law—since you have asked me to tell you the plain facts.”

“And what remedy have I?”

"You can raise a suit for Restitution of Conjugal Rights, but as he is domiciled in India, there will be difficulty in having the decree enforced, for the duty of cohabitation is regarded by most systems of law as a duty of imperfect obligation, and not to be enforced by courts of law. Thus it is merely a question of alimony for you. We must try and get the best terms, if things come to the worst; but I do not think he can let matters go so far. I do not know if he can afford to do so in India, but old Mr. and Miss Montrose can certainly not brave public opinion here."

(They have proved they could all afford it, and much more.)

"Is there no redress for me?" I asked.

"None whatever, except to wait four years, when you will be entitled to a divorce for desertion, to the third part of his fortune, and, I should think, to your daughter."

What the solicitor told me in India was accentuated in Scotland. I had you safely in Switzerland, but my sons might be taken away from me, handed over to my enemies. They evidently knew all this. Yet even then I did not despair, else I feel sure I should have brought your brothers to join you, even if I had had to carry them in my arms. I still believed that once your father was back, everything would be right again, though certainly, looking now at things, I had no reason to expect this.

Thus, amidst anxiety and joy, the days went on. I spent my time doing needlework in the drawing-room filled with the souvenirs of so many boys who had loved and still loved Mr. Anstruther, and wondering how it would be when once Montfort and Laurent would have grown up to be men. I thought how well they, so ten-

der and attentive, more like lovers than sons, would take care of me. They would be fathers and bring their children, and I would take them on my knees, to caress and love, as I had loved my own.

I never went out without your brothers, sometimes with one alone, but almost invariably with both. They again filled my life as once before at Weimar. You were then with us, *petite*; but you were happy though away from me. Each of Madame's letters told me so, and the time of the holidays was drawing nigh. Soon Allan would be back.

The last Saturday before the end of the term your brothers went to their grandfather's. I spent the whole long afternoon by myself, strangely disturbed. Why had I let them go, I asked myself, I who had no one else in the whole town? The hours dragged on wearily.

They were always home for supper-time, but this had passed long ago, and there was no sign of them. I went downstairs to speak to the Powells about my fears. I must have been very foolish, for even then the thought never entered my brain that the Montroses could break the promise given to me by your grandfather on the night of my arrival, that my boys should only spend stated times at Dunbar Place. My faith had not yet been entirely destroyed, and I could not believe that people who profess the religion of Christ can openly become traitors.

Whilst I was speaking to Mrs. Powell her brother came in. All that follows is too hazy to be related in detail. So much only stands out. Your grandfather had told Mr. Anstruther in the afternoon that he intended to keep my sons.

"In fact, I have been wrong to let her take them at all. My son wanted me to keep them, I should have

done what he told me. But it is all right now, she will never have them back."

These were the words Mr. Anstruther repeated to me.

"And his promise, and my trust in him, how will he explain away those things?" I asked him in indignation and despair. "I do not speak of honour, not even of religion—that old man who every night bends his knees and reads prayers to his household—nor do I speak of the instinct which prompts a man not to do a mean thing towards a woman. I only speak of common decency. How could he do such a treacherous thing?"

For the first time it then struck me that all this had been a scheme laid by Polly. They had been afraid of me from the first—imagine a whole household afraid of one woman, a stranger in a strange land—and to ward me off until nearer the time when your father was coming back, they had treacherously promised, never meaning to fulfil.

The impossible had happened. My sons had been taken from me. Never mind what I felt. It does not bear recalling, even after long years. I was alone. Unless you have stood *mutterseelenallein* on the verge of despair, you will not fathom what I felt. The Powells were dear, kind people, but cautious. They had to look after their own interests. My children must be fetched back, but I felt I had to go alone.

I walked through the dusk of the late evening to Dunbar Place. When I found that the gate which opened by a latch was locked, I rang the bell. No reply came. I called aloud:

"Montfort! Laurent! Mother is here. Come to me."

The old man opened the front door and came down the path.

"Where are my children?" I said. "I must have them. Give them back to me at once."

"They are my son's children, not yours. They will remain with us. Go away!"

He felt afraid of what the neighbours must think, and looked round uneasily, for unless the whole square was deaf, they must have heard.

"Give me my sons back. You have no right to keep them. They are mine. Give them back to me. I entreat, I beseech you. You cannot keep them from me. Do not drive me to do desperate things."

I stood outside the gate, but he went back towards the house. Standing in the middle of the tiled path, he shook his fist at me, and shouted:

"Do what you like. We are prepared for you."

.

All the time, as they told me themselves in days to come, my sons, Montfort and Laurent, were standing at an upper window, watching me.

XXXVII

To write to you as I do now, I must again live over those terrible hours. Their spectres have often come in the anguish of my nights. I thrust them from me, and force myself to believe that, if I have not forgotten, at least I have accepted. But it is not so. Now that for your sake I have recalled these memories, I feel the pain as keenly as ever, and I know that nothing in the world will ever comfort me for the woe which entered my heart when I lost my sons.

It was Saturday. The night was coming. I was without a single friend in that dismal city, for I could not further trouble the kind people to whom my coming had brought so much anxiety. As I felt no time must be lost, I went alone to Esk Street to ask from the house-keeper the solicitor's private address. He was out of town, so I went back late at night to the room where only in the morning my dear ones had been laughing as they invented pet-names for me. I cannot bear to speak even to you of that night.

The next day was Sunday, and nothing could be done.

On Monday, at the earliest hour, I stood before the solicitor's house. It was holiday time and the senior partner whom I had seen before was away, but the younger one promised help, and advised me to take steps at once. I seem to remember he called at Dunbar Place. I wished to accompany him, but somehow this was not possible. All conciliatory measures failed. Old Mr. Montrose stated that he was acting under advice, and declined to let Mr. Elder even see my children, as I had begged him to do, for I still believed that my darlings were kept from me by force.

There was no other resource now but law. I was already experiencing what an unwieldy machine it is. Soon I had to learn that the course of justice is like that of a four-in-hand, which can go through a window, but always smashes the building.

Two days afterwards the case was laid before Lord Ayr. My position looked suspicious, as my adviser told me, and though I was maddened with despair, I had yet enough brains left to see this. The judge must have been a kind man, for he asked us all to his house. So on a Wednesday in his dining-room the parties were

heard. There was a wife—a Frenchwoman—deserted by her husband who held a high position. He had given her an open credit, but did not want her to have “his children.” There was an old man, a respected citizen, carrying out the instructions of his son who was coming back—at last I knew the date—in four weeks.

A promise broken, treachery and meanness were mere details, not even to be mentioned. There was the law clear and explicit, making a father sole guardian of his children. It was certainly a difficult position for a judge. I asked for leave to speak, and he courteously granted it. I did not mind the counsel at Mr. Montrose’s side who laid before “My Lord” weighty arguments, nor my solicitor who was saying all the time: “Stop, you will only prejudice your case.” I have heard that argument thousands of times since.

At that time I had yet to learn that justice is not a plain statement of facts, not right or wrong; but that clever legal voices can turn black into white.

Most people are afraid to be their true selves; I had no fear. I spoke eloquently, for I pled for my children. I entreated the judge to let me at least have them until their father’s return. Even had he understood, still he had to administer the law. He decided that my children must remain under the temporary guardianship their father had chosen, but gave me free access to them in their grandfather’s house. I felt it was hideous to go there, but what I felt was after all a mere detail.

“Let me go to-day,” I said to the judge. “Four days have passed since I saw them.”

He consented, and spoke of an order.

There had been some whispering going on between your grandfather and his counsel, who now said that the children had gone away.

"And where are they?" asked the judge. "I think this was a very hasty step to take."

"My daughter took them to the Highlands early on Sabbath morning, but I will telegraph to her to bring them back at once. Their mother can come to-morrow afternoon."

So Polly had gone away with my little sons on a "Sabbath morning," she who once had said that the Tay Bridge had broken down because people were travelling on that holy day. How could she justify, even to herself, the diabolical work she did on that Sunday, after having taken away my children from their mother on the eve which she should have devoted to pious preparations?

Two days afterwards, on a Friday, at four in the afternoon, Polly was to arrive with Montfort and Laurent, and I to see them. Such had been the order of the court. I had utilised these two days to arrange everything for flight with my sons. There was no hope of Allan ever coming back to me in that country which separates a mother from her children. Once away, everything was a gain—here only loss. I had been told that once over the border in England, laws were more merciful. How did I know if it was true? I had never been able to understand the distinction between English and Scotch. Madame had consulted her friends, men and women of note, and she called me to her.

I took tickets for Antwerp. Once on the boat, we were safe. As soon as my little sons saw me, the battle would be won. There was no need to tell them all that "mother" had suffered. I would say to them, "Come," take one by each hand and run away. Cabs, and reliable men, bought over with gold, were at every possible point

—in an hour or so we would be far away, and all our trouble at an end.

So I thought as I saw Polly arrive and hand out Montfort and Laurent with great precaution from the cab. I waved my hand and called them by name. Did they look at me? I do not know, but they ran into the house. By this time I was standing before the gate, just in time to see your aunt lock it, and take away the key.

I rang.

The servant came, opened the gate, and asked me to come in.

"No," I said, "bring me my sons. I will see them here in the front."

She allowed me to step in, locked the gate again, and took away the key. I did not mind. I would jump over the railings, and for my boys it would be the easiest of feats. The maid came back and urged me to go to the grass plot at the back, where on a Monday the 'Montroses' washing was hung up to dry. But this also I declined.

The door opened. Your two brothers came out. My mind has only kept this imprint—try as I will, I never see them differently—my two poor little sons! They looked frightened, ashamed, bewildered, and what is worst of all, they were to prove to their mother that they were cowards.

I took them both in my outstretched arms, and pressed them against me as if I never could let them go.

"Darlings! It is Mothie, your own little Mothie whom you so love. How I have suffered away from you! But we are again together and all is right. Come at once, jump over the gate, and help me. Everything is ready, and we are going away together."

I released my hold of them.

"Come! Now we are going."

They stood before me, not even looking me in the face.

"What are you waiting for?" I asked. "We must go at once."

I stood aghast. The unprincipled woman had corrupted my children's souls, for when I took them again in my arms and looked into their faces, I read there hostile suspicion. For a second, I thought someone had changed my children. They were big boys, Montfort was thirteen and Laurent eleven, but they both began to cry aloud, as if I were inflicting upon them the most cruel hurt.

Out of the house-door rushed Polly, her father and another man—a detective they had hired. I still held my children. Those three fell upon me, by force tore them out of my arms, and carried them into the house, Polly shouting all the time:

"You see we were prepared for you."

XXXVIII

"Mes pleurs sont à moi. Nul au monde
Ne les a comptés ni reçus.
Pas un œil humain qui sonde
Les désespoirs que j'ai conçus."

MY "abduction," as the law called the fruitless attempt of a mother to get back her children, had been planned

from the hotel where I had gone, anxious not to obtrude unfairly upon the kindness of the dear people who had received me.

Soon I had to appear again before Lord Ayr and listen to many accusations, as malicious as they were fictitious, though I naturally could not deny that I had intended to remove the children from the grasp of the enemy. I do not know what punishment old Mr. Montrose hoped would be meted out to me for "contempt of court," but he seemed greatly disappointed when the judge merely remarked that such family strife was most regrettable, and hoped that Allan's arrival would set matters right for all parties.

I was asked to give a solemn undertaking not to interfere again with the present guardianship, but I refused. I had still free access to your brothers, but the Montroses' counsel so graphically described the most unlikely eventualities that the judge deprived me of the permission he had given; and settled that until the arrival of their father—in view of the recent attempt to take my children "by violence" out of the jurisdiction of the Scotch Court and my refusal to pledge my word—matters should remain in abeyance.

Scotchmen are evidently more lavish with their children than with their money, for the judge more than once expressed his surprise at the control your father had given me of the former, whilst he refused me your brothers. A smile flickered over old Montrose's face. I soon understood it, for two days afterwards the cheque I had sent to London came back dishonoured. Was there treachery everywhere?

Even then, though, I did not understand what money difficulties meant; for when my solicitor told me he must have a provision, I wrote to Madame de Saint-Jean, and

she telegraphed me a hundred pounds. I little understood the value of money in those days, and thought it only natural that I should hand over this sum to him entirely, though I had told him that from lack of funds I must leave the hotel. In my desire to get away with your brothers I had lavished money with full hands, and never yet having known what want implies, did not quite understand what I was facing. Nor did I realise it at the beginning, for I was not living as other people do, I was simply moving in a hideous nightmare. If to-day I told my story to a stranger, he would shudder, and ask himself how I lived through those days. Every mother, I know, would feel for me, and the cruel wrong done to motherhood. Looking back now, it seems to me that I did not live in this world. I must have dressed and eaten and walked about, and every day called once at my solicitor's, as I found out afterwards by the bills; but I believe only my body was doing these things, not my spirit. Had it been there, I feel sure it would have died with anguish and despair.

They were not my children, those boys who lived in the same town, at scarcely half an hour's walking distance. No, those were not the bright little baby sons I had borne, and carried in my arms with such pride, with whom I had played and who had loved me. Mine were true, loyal and fearless. They would be some day men of whom any high-spirited woman might be proud. Those I had lost. For them my heart cried day and night, but they were not here in Scotland, where I had lost them—and my spirit went away to seek them.

There were two cringing boys who had stood before me only a few days ago; but masks had been on their faces, and on them were written antagonism and be-

trayal of that primitive duty, loyalty to the mother, which the child sucks with her milk. Those children were somewhere close, but they were nothing to me. Shame filled my being at their remembrance. I could not bear to see those boys again. It would be a relief, since they were the children of some other poor woman, my sister in sorrow, if I might hold them dead in my arms, take them to her, and say: "Mourn no more. See, they are dead. Now you also can go to rest."

In the most intense moments of my life I have been oblivious of things which otherwise might have wounded me a thousand times. I speak here of discomfort, of the misery of life, the fear of poverty which is worse than death to some. I had lived too long in the East also where millions are poor, very poor, and never suffer, for it to affect me.

The short northern summer brought your father. I wrote to him. He did not reply to my letters. I believed he had not received them, and no longer trusting the post—had grief made me lose my reason?—I wasted my last five pounds on a detective to hand one to him. There was still no reply.

I see myself before the judge who sat once a week during vacation, asking for access to my sons; and the judge seemed to understand. They had all gone to the Highlands. I was given permission to go there and have my sons brought to me every day for two hours. I had only one dress left, and that was very shabby. This troubled me, for I was anxious to be at least *présentable*.

I need not have worried. As soon as "free access as to any ordinary parent" had been granted, it was appealed against.

"He will have to pay for that," said my solicitor, as

if money could for one single moment enter into balance with my grief.

You see, my child, I had not yet fathomed that most people are consoled by money. This cut proceedings short, and left me without your brothers, without means of subsistence also for almost three months, which passed away far more slowly than years.

I took a bare room at the top of a house. I remember that the carts rattled early on the paved road beneath the window as they went to market. I have suffered much since those days which, after all, were not the most bitter, though they hurt most. I cannot tell you how I went through them, for I remember very little of what I did. There was really nothing I could do, except call upon my solicitor at his office; the Powells were wounded at the Montroses' behaviour, or possibly had grown tired of me. In the morning, this I know because I hated it, I went to a café for my breakfast, a cup of tea and some toast—I had to look at every penny. Here I generally read the paper. I tried hard to get interested in the *Scotsman* and really succeeded. I remember the courage I found one morning in the lines:

“What though the field be lost?
All is not lost; the unconquerable Will,
.....
And courage never to submit or yield:
And what is else, not to be overcome?
That Glory never shall his wrath or might
Extort from me.”

Grand old Milton! Though in the paper these lines were applied to a Parliamentary candidate who had failed, I felt as if they had been written specially for me.

During the long evenings I would wander aimlessly through the streets, hoping I might meet my little sons

—the real ones, those I had lost. I never could think of them at Dunbar Place or in the Highlands. I once ran after two boys in kilts, thinking it was they. All the time one thought was uppermost in my mind—the wrong which had been done to me, to us.

I now believe it was in those days that I buried my sons. During four months I was alone in that dismal place. I would sit down and call you back, all and each of you. You were once again my babies. In those long, dreary hours in the barren room which was so bitterly cold when autumn followed summer, and I had no money to pay for a fire, I would take you one after another on my knees. It made me feel warm to have your little bodies on my lap.

I lifted you out of the bath before me, dried and powdered you. The binder I sewed so that the pin might not hurt you. I fingered the lace of the dainty shirt, and looked at its lappet, so that it fell well over the petticoats. The little dress would follow, when I had brushed your hair. I knew every turn of your bodies, their every fold. Before the exquisite pink feet disappeared into the silken socks and small low shoes, I would kiss them again and again. There was not a finger-nail on the hands of you three which had not its special feature for me—I had so often polished them—not a dimple on the back of your hands I did not know, I had kissed them so many thousand times.

Suddenly I would hear the noise of vehicles on the paved street, and the happy vision vanished. With a shudder I would wake up and find myself alone in my poor, bare room.

The human heart is like a flower. After I had weathered those storms in Scotland, mine never got right again. It did not wither and droop, nor did sorrow

mercifully "wear me out," as it does some privileged ones. I was not made thus. But something was taken from my life and never could be replaced.

XXXIX

"Allein, allein! O Gott, ein einzig Wesen,
Um dieses Haupt an seine Brust zu legen."

POLLY destroyed in my three children—for you also, my own one, were to become her prey—every spark of loyalty towards their mother. Yet she must have spoken of me to you to accomplish her object. I have asked myself often what picture she drew for you. Was it that of an unnatural mother, negligent of all her duties, or of a siren who draws the hearts of men?

It is true that I have been an object of love for many. I have met affection, sympathy, adoration—merely different words for the same thing—everywhere.

At first, under the weight of misfortune when the end of all things came, I thought I would "bar affection out from among my afflictions." In the long years of solitude some still have pressed close to me; and their hands held gifts not to be bought nor sold on the markets of the world. I tried to thrust them from me, but some prevailed, and life again assumed for me the value it always has, when our happiness is necessary to the happiness of others. Even now many love and would have loved me more, had I allowed them, though my life has remained a closed book to all. Sometimes an urchin in the street watches for days just to tell me how pleased

he is to see me. There are many who bitterly complain that they would like to do much for me, not to speak of the one affection which has faithfully accompanied me now for so many years; but even to her I can devote myself little, for life is merciless in its exactions, and as my darling mother used to tell the impetuous child, "*il faut prendre le temps pour être aimable.*"

Affection and solicitude have always surrounded me, with one exception—those days in Scotland. There everyone looked askance at me, everyone was suspicious. Sometimes I involuntarily asked myself if I had really done something thus to disquieten those placid minds. There was not one soul to love me, to give me a word of encouragement or hope. I never felt so forsaken in my life. Even the cat in the passage of the house where I lived ran away when it saw me, and the big yellow collie, whom I would have loved, growled at me.

When I grew calmer, and knew that Allan would naturally receive my letters, I often wrote to him, and at great length. I confided in him, as one does to a diary. They were long rambling letters, and I thought he might not read them; but later on they were printed and put into court. My solicitor was very annoyed, and said I had "prejudiced my case"; I did not mind. It had been a relief to write them, for the days were long and very dreary.

I could ascertain nothing about your father, not even if he had returned from the Highlands. One morning early, standing at the window in the solicitor's waiting-room, I saw him step out of a cab, and with him Polly. They both ran up the steps of the next house. It made me tremble from head to foot to see him, yet I noticed that he wore a brown suit—brown was not his colour—and looked very grim and sallow. That he came down

from the Highlands to look after "his interests"—which is the legal term, though it may mean ruin in common parlance—seemed natural; but what was Polly doing with him?

A few hours later, walking aimlessly in the street, I saw Allan pass with Polly on his arm. He did not recognise me at first. I was so shabbily dressed, having only that one gown. When he understood that it was I, he stopped for one moment as if struck by fright, then went on. I ran after him, overtook them and barred their way. He leant against a shop-window, Polly at his side.

"You are the curse of us all," I said to her. "But for you, he would have come back to me."

By this time she had again taken hold of his arm. "Do not listen to her," she said, and they went away together. Allan had not spoken a word.

Another day I was sitting in the Public Library when I looked up, and saw Allan and your aunt coming towards me. When they were quite close his eyes and mine met. "Come," he said to Polly and they both went away.

I saw your father for the last time in the middle of October. His leave was over, and he had to appear before a commission regarding his income, in view of my alimony. I was ordered to be present. I really knew nothing about those things, and had told my solicitor so, but he thought my presence would compel Allan to state facts correctly. He appeared in that same brown suit. I wondered if he had done it on purpose, for I never allowed him to wear that colour. When he arrived with his solicitor and counsel, we sat one at each end of a long table. All through the interrogatories I suffered horribly. When questioned I said that I was in

complete ignorance of his possessions; all I knew was that I had spent money freely, and that there was plenty.

The only thing which troubled me was his returning to India, leaving me alone in Scotland. I felt I should never see him again.

Two days afterwards the court allotted me a large sum of money until the case could be heard finally. At the same time I was informed to my horror and disgust that your father before leaving had put a notice into the papers repudiating my debts. This, after I had been starving for three months whilst, as his wife, I might have drawn upon his credit. In my country, people would be ashamed to do such a thing, even under great provocation, and here there had been none. Even then I rejoiced to know that I owed nothing to anyone. This training had been good for me. Every fool can spend money, but it requires great pluck to do without it.

It is difficult to say, child, what we will do when temptation approaches, and even the strongest and best of us have their moments of weakness. I have often wondered how you judge those actions, for I do not know how far she, who used every foul means towards me, has debased you, and time has been on her side, powerful to destroy and corrupt. I, your mother, must tell you that there are things which we cannot do if we wish to live at peace with ourselves, and fulfil our duties towards our fellow-men—I do not speak here of those we love and to whom we are in duty bound. None of us lives to himself, every act of our life influences another for good or evil.

What would my dear, stately little mother—of late years I have lived much with her—have said to the means which have been used against the daughter she so loved; and in whose heart she so tenderly and

earnestly endeavoured to instil all the high principles which were natural to her *comme l'eau qui coule vers la mer*. In those dark days in Scotland I seemed sometimes to hear her voice: "Courage! If you do the right thing they will never be able to bring you down to their level."

My first thought in my desolation with that paper in my hand, marked and sent to me, I never could ascertain by whom, flew to her. Do you understand, my child, what it means to have lived a great, noble life, so that when nothing of us seems to remain, the mere thought of us is a help to others?

Madame de Saint-Jean looked upon these things as I do. This was the chief link between us. For the rest, she was quite bewildered, and could not understand why I did not return to her and you.

"They have wounded all my notions of right and wrong," she wrote me. "Do not fight for what is not worth possessing. Leave them all, and come to me."

Still I remained. I was like the typical flower—shall I say flower or weed?—of the country which held me prisoner, the thistle, the burr, as they say in Scotland.

A great gloom settled upon me. I seldom wrote to Madame, but she was most faithful in keeping me *au courant* of all that concerned you, who fortunately knew nothing of what *petite mère* suffered. She told me how the Swiss authorities, anxious to know if you were properly taught, had sent for you, and how you had gone to Montreux accompanied by your governess. The examiners had been pleased with your knowledge, and as, before I left you with Madame, I had been your sole teacher, I felt happy and proud.

One letter came for me every Monday. Sometimes

I forgot, and when I called at the post office, there were three or four. The letters were those of a friend, true, discreet, and yet invigorating, and sounded as if interested in my doings. They were from a man I had known in India, one of the many. Mr. Raymond Joscelyn and I had met at Simla years before. He was a well-known personality, but I had almost lost sight of him, when one day his first message came to me. They came regularly after that, and never asked questions, not even for news. It was simply a man telling a woman what he was doing—the everyday, the insignificant details which sometimes have such importance. The letters were to me like a breath of fresh air, a sight of the wide expanse of fields lying green before me at dawn, the deep mystery of the jungle where I so often had passed on horseback. They were an echo of free, untrammelled life, the voice of a high-bred, high-souled man making me feel I was not quite alone—that in the boundless desolation which surrounded me I was not entirely forgotten.

I sometimes replied, not always, not regularly. Soon I knew that if I wrote or not, the letter would always come. As the days drew on there lay certain comfort in those lines, always so distant, so unobtrusive, and yet so different from all that surrounded me. I believe I should have missed them had they not come. I began again to be interested in books, and find comfort in them. They would stir up thoughts in me, and at times I would write and tell him about them. There was never the faintest allusion to what I was going through, never a reference to husband or children—except that I sometimes spoke to him of you, for he had seen you and knew how I worshipped my little daughter. There was no allusion to what might be or not be. He never asked

why I had left you in Switzerland, never inquired why I was staying away, or when I should return. In his letters mind spoke to mind. I never thought of him as admiring or caring for me. There was not one word which, even to the most fastidious judge, would have implied this. It was merely music to my jaded spirit, a note of interest, more precious because not offered as such. In those missives I could only read the most disinterested tribute of perhaps a secret sympathy, some moments whiled away in conversation between a woman and a man who loved *l'art de causer*. He reminded me that once I had told him I considered real conversation the chief intellectual pleasure of life.

XL

As soon as I had money, I left my barren room to live in an hotel on the outskirts of the town. I cannot say that I was happy there—nothing at that time would have made me happy, except Allan coming and bringing me our children—but I certainly was well cared for in that warm, comfortable place.

At times, a lady staying there went to visit her son on a half-holiday in the new school to which your brothers had been sent, and would bring back, just for a little, a wave of suspicion. People seated round the fire in the evening would stop their conversation when I entered the room, but such trifles no longer really affected me, for I lived in a dream. I had again been granted access to my children, “as any ordinary

parent." I had written at great length to the Principal of their new school, but he merely acknowledged my letter. I felt I could not go there, for I had no longer the control of my sons' upbringing. Old Mr. Montrose was their guardian—in other words Polly—and I knew it would only make me more unhappy, so I remained away, always hoping some day they would be mine again.

One Sunday afternoon—their visit had been announced by their solicitors to mine—they were brought to me in the hotel in a carriage which waited outside to take them back. My room looked comfortable, a cheerful fire was burning, and I had placed chairs round it—three chairs. When Montfort and Laurent came in, I scarcely recognised them in their silk hats and Eton suits, for I had always thought of them as little Highlanders. I opened my arms and held them close. Then I took them both on my knees, and we sat all three silent before the fire and looked into the bright flames, for neither of us found anything to say. I felt as if I could not begin to tell them one of the thousand things I wished them to know. We spoke of mere indifferent trifles, and yet, whatever I chose, there was one point or another which had to be avoided. I could refer to nothing, ask after no one.

They remained for dinner, and everyone was kind, they did not look at us *comme des bêtes curieuses*. I felt more moved than I can tell you. Even now, after all these long years, something grips me at the throat, I who have grown so calm when pain wrings my heart. I remember how I longed to take them both in my arms and sob aloud, and what a relief it would have been. Still I felt this must not be. What helped me most was that they were no longer the children who would have

understood what their mother suffered and would have grieved with her. Of what use also were tears, they would never take away the big throbbing pain in my heart.

There were prayers every evening at this family hotel. Will you be surprised when I tell you that from the very first they had comforted me? They soothed my weary spirit, so I always attended. On that evening, with your two brothers beside me, we sang Cardinal Newman's "Lead kindly light." I knew it well and always had loved it. But when we came to those lines: "And with the morn those angel faces smile which I have loved long since and lost awhile," a great peace suddenly flooded me, and set at rest the devouring anguish. It was true that I had lost my loved ones, but some day—when, does not matter so long as hope lasts—they would be given back to me. Sometimes I believe even now that it will be so. I know it is impossible, and yet for moments it comforts me that I shall see my darlings again, not as they were then, corrupted by that bad woman, but as they once were—sons of mine. I would rather a thousand times never see them again than see them as when we parted. Even if it never comes true, if the hope, as so many of its sisters, is only a mirage, yet it is good to have this thought with me when sleep at last comes, and my spirit leaves my body. They sometimes come back to me then just as I long for them, but I never see their faces.


A detective had accompanied your brothers; so I was told by the people of the hotel, who felt indignant though they did not know how to show it. I saw the man sitting beside the driver when I took them to the carriage and said good-bye. It was the same who some weeks before had helped to tear them out of my arms when I

had tried to "abduct" them. So they went away, the dear little men, but I no longer seemed to mind.

All through the proceedings, my solicitor, who for a "man of law" showed a certain refined understanding of my pain, regretted that our legal adversaries used such coarse means, and thought that different advisers would have guided your father and the Montroses to behave more humanly. I believed this for a time, but no. They were paid to do this dirty work, and acted according to their instructions. My enemies needed no instigators, they were all and each of them well versed in measures as low and contemptible as they were cruel to me, though how Allan could have used them, he whom I had never seen do a low thing, remains to me even now a mystery.

Every day, in any kind of weather, I walked from the hotel to the solicitor's, and to while away the time in his waiting-room one day, he sent me, by one of his clerks, Fraser, "On Husband and Wife," a volume of Scotch law which to me was of burning interest, and certainly much more *à propos* at the moment than the most thrilling novel.

I wish that the women who suffer so valiantly and fight for the vote would read and be inspired by the wrong Scotch husbands have done to their wives under the shelter of the law. One had kept the mother of his children a prisoner in a room, another on a deserted island. The misery some of those women suffered, makes me even now feel sick at heart that such things are possible in a country which I admire in many respects. There seems to have been no loophole for them anywhere, only hard-and-fast rules of law, made by the strong against the weak. The whole jurisprudence of Scotland has a strong flavour of that dispensed in the



Rome of old. Though it is generous in its broad outlines, it is full of antagonism to woman, and case-law is almost omnipotent. Such or such iniquity was perpetrated upon a woman fifty years ago—you are a woman, the sword of Damocles is suspended over your head, and if you appeal to the law to help you, it will fall. The spirit of the country is valiant and true, but hard, suspicious, bound by the prejudice and puritanism which breathes in those statutes; and for woman, the law-books of Scotland, like Dante's "Inferno," bear the inscription: "*Lasciate ogni speranza.*"

I knew all this, but I had no longer anything to lose, so I set myself to study Scotch law and studied from early morning until late at night in the smoking-room of the hotel, where it was very quiet. At last I found a purpose in life. Soon I discovered that there was an English enactment influencing present Scotch statutes, giving the court great discretion in the interest of the children. My two barristers were able, but it was not possible that they could espouse this cause as a woman would have done—they could not feel for her, and were simply paid to fight. How was it possible for them to clothe in words the agony I felt?

I resolved I would present a petition myself. The judges, I thought, did not know how things really were. The facts had not been properly presented to them.

I would tell the judges that I had nothing left in life but you three, how I had suffered in losing Montfort and Laurent, how much I loved you all, how necessary you were to my happiness. It was essential also for my children that we should be reunited. I would speak of my enemies, how they had treacherously taken your brothers away from me, ruined their natures. Surely

188 A MOTHER IN EXILE

they were men and fathers, the sons of mothers, they would give them back to me.

The judges agreed early in December to receive my petition. I was greatly afraid of the ordeal, and lay sleepless for nights. When I stood before them I was in that state of exaltation which is produced by great sorrow or great joy. I no longer knew fear. I spoke for an hour or more—not wildly.

“The whole question lies in a nutshell, my Lords,” I concluded. “Is it the law of your country that when a man—husband and father—deserts his wife because it pleases him to do so, he may take from her the children she bore him, to put them into the hands of her enemies?”

I founded my address upon Scotch case-law, for there were exceptions, even among those brutal records; and begged those men who held my fate in their hands, to do what was best “in the interest of all of us,” exercising their discretion and using the privilege which had been conferred upon them by the English enactment, so that my children might be taken from those who were corrupting their hearts against their mother.

The three judges sat in their black robes, and looked weary, cynical, indifferent, half-asleep. They showed not the least interest, did not question me. I knew they would never understand. When I had used all my arguments, I sat down. Nothing was changed.

When grief comes into my life it enters by every pore, absorbs me completely. There lies no comfort for me in the thought that others possibly may suffer more. Nothing except the remembrance of how some valiant soul bore misfortune ever gives me power to resist the attack. As a little girl—was I ever really small? It seems to me that the precocious child was born a woman

—my mother took me with her to visit a battle-field after one of our great defeats during *l'année malheureuse*. "You must see how some do suffer," my mother said. It was winter. Our soldiers, those the ambulance had not yet taken away, were lying upon the ground covered with snow and ice, with blood also, for many were bleeding from awful wounds. Some waited to have a limb amputated, others were racked with fever and pain, but each one smiled when my mother bent over them with the wine, soup and wraps we had brought; and the child wondered how this was possible.

I have seen many suffer since then, in India's famine-stricken plains, in hospital wards, or during the plague in palaces and hovels, but never again have I met that pluck against deadly odds which the child admired in the *pious-pious* of her country. There was no reproach against their chiefs who had led them to this carnage, no murmur *que la chance avait été contre eux*. They taught me a great lesson, my child—to accept adversity is the only way which enables us to bear it.

The lesson my mother put into my life has remained the greatest of heirlooms. In that night of violence when your father struck me, I thought of those men on the blood-coloured fields, smiling, cheerful, witty.

I also resolved by every effort to remain, herein at least, true to the ideal of my country—put a smile to the front, and never weary the world with the sight of my grief. Thus it was only natural that when your brothers came at Christmas to spend part of their holidays with me, I did not wish them even to suspect that "mother" was sad, but to take away the remembrance of happy days with me. There were many festivities at the hotel and the boys enjoyed themselves greatly. Their room was close to mine, but things seemed no

longer the same. The sweet habit of coming to me in the early morning was set aside. We did not refer to the months which had passed—what could I have asked that I did not know? And as Allan never wrote to our children, they naturally only knew what it had pleased Polly to tell them. Thus I never referred to him. It was a shock, though, when Laurent casually told me they both had been standing at the window on that summer evening when I came to fetch them. I acted as if I had not understood. Poor little sons! If I had had time I might have won them back. There was much to undo of what Polly had done—I only had ten days and the Montroses the rest.

As usual, I lavished all kinds of gifts upon them. It was really the only pleasure I had. Together we chose beautiful presents for you and sent a large box to Switzerland for *Nouvel An*. I bought them, among other things, fine skates and curling-stones, for it was a cold winter and we spent many a happy hour on the beautiful ice close to the hotel. At first I could not understand why they were so surprised at my loving attentions, for they should have been accustomed to them. Soon I grasped that they evidently had been told I had no money, and if they remained with me they would lack everything. Those little sons of mine had their mother's sybarite nature, and evidently were afraid. They once asked if it was true that I had no money except what their father gave me. This is the only reference to him they ever made.

They came to me just as in the past; they would kiss and caress me, and often sit beside me on one of the arms of the large fauteuils in the drawing-room, but something had been taken away from our joy. Nothing ever told me that they felt it. After all they were only

children and could not mourn, as their mother did, that all the seeds she had planted would never bear flower or fruit for her. I knew life could never give me back

"The morning-song beneath the stars that fled
With twilight through the moonless mountain air,"

but this was far less sad than that it had taken my Montfort and Laurent from me.

We spent the last afternoon together in the deserted drawing-room; for all the people in the hotel were on the ice. Montfort was with me near the fire, half-sitting on the arm of my chair, half-leaning against me. The brothers seemed troubled all day, and my eldest-born was sadly oppressed. For hours he did not speak and only looked at the fire. I wondered what was passing through my child's mind. At last I asked:

"Would you rather come out with me on the ice?"

"No, let us stay here, please," Laurent said, who was beside me reading.

Presently there came a deep sigh from the child whose head was resting on my shoulder. I could bear it no longer.

"Are you sad, Montfort, because you are leaving mother?" I asked.

"I have a headache, mother. Let me remain quietly beside you."

Later on I took them both by train to the suburban station upon which the legal men had decided. When we stepped out of the compartment I looked about, wondering who was to meet them, but at that moment your grandfather pounced upon us, caught my sons one by each hand, and went away.

This was the last time I saw him.

XLI

My address to the judges was but an intermezzo. Your father had gone back, but the Montroses were hard at work. All the time they were trying to get you back from Switzerland, though naturally you knew nothing of it. Poor little Madame, so old and so fragile! What trouble we were giving her! In January, my solicitor submitted an offer to me that I might keep you, if I agreed to live in Scotland and send you regularly to your father's people. The second condition I could not accept. I too well remembered Montfort's music lessons.

"Rather than send my child to those people to corrupt her, I would see her lying dead before me. This is my reply, you can give it to them."

In February the custody of Montfort and Laurent was to be finally settled. When the day came, the judges seemed somewhat more interested; but they decided that in your father's absence the Montroses were the guardians of my sons!

When I came out of court, I was told that there had been letters put in from Mrs. Martineau and Lord Vernon, which, though no evidence in law, had strongly prejudiced my case through the accusations they implied.

My legal advisers told me that even they had not been able to look at the documents before, as they had been put in the judge's box at the last moment. "There must be some truth in them," they seemed to think, "else how could they have produced letters from such well-known people?"

"The letters are genuine enough. I have the originals in my possession," I said, after the printed copies had been brought; though I found out afterwards that in those of Mrs. Martineau some words had been intentionally changed. There was also a shameful letter from her to your father. The correspondence, as my enemies had intended, gave the appearance of truth to some mysterious allusions made by the opposing counsel. With a certain commiseration he had alluded to the fact that your brothers *could* not be entrusted to me. In those days—it was long before the *entente cordiale*—the fact that I was a "daughter of Heth" went powerfully against me in Scotland even in judicial proceedings, and I thought he alluded to my nationality, whilst in reality he was referring to my supposed inebriety, which the correspondence appeared to confirm.

"I must set this right," I exclaimed as soon as I understood what those vague insinuations implied.

"You can do nothing," the three men beside me hastened to say. "You have not the least chance with an appeal. Even if we had the money to risk, it would be utterly useless. We always told you to accept the terms they offered about your daughter. As a matter of course, they will get her now."

"There is only one thing left to be done, and I shall do it. I shall ask an account of those who used the letters against me, knowing them to be untrue. This I can only do there where they were written. By next mail I leave for India."

I reached home in the beginning of March. I took a *ticca gharry*—I never had been in one in my life—and drove to the bungalow. The gardeners ran when they saw me to tell the house servant that the Madam Sahib

had arrived. They came and stood under the porch salaaming; too well trained—or perhaps too indifferent—to show the least surprise. Only the butler inquired if I was well.

“Have my luggage put into my room”—instead of innumerable trunks, it was this time merely my dressing-bag and the small black trunk your brothers had recognised—“and bring me some tea. Is the Sahib well? When will he be home?”

“Sahib very well. Coming home every afternoon four; then taking tea and big carriage, and return home very late. Always dining Bandy Sahib now.”

“That’s all right. I am pleased to see you all so well. As soon as the Sahib comes, tell him I am here.”

I went to my bed and dressing-rooms, then to my boudoir. All was just as I had left it. Those days in Scotland must have been a hideous nightmare. Once again I was at home.

The butler brought me tea. “Look out for an *ayah* at once,” I said. “Unpack my things and put them in the cupboard. Then go.”

I went to the stables to look at my hunters, *Matin* and *Aurore*. They were no longer there, and the *syces* told me the Sahib had sent them away the day we left for Europe, you and I—nearly a year ago. The other horses were old friends, so I had them taken out of their loose-boxes, and they ate sugar out of my hand that I had brought for my two favourites. When I went back to my room, the bearer had finished. I had brought almost nothing with me. All my summer clothes had been left at home. To-morrow I would get them out. I had been in such straits in my Scotch attic, because on my last visit I had entrusted my winter clothes and furs to the *Montroses*, and they refused to give them up. Now I

was again in the land of eternal summer. What a comfort it was to be at home, and what folly to have suffered all those long months in Scotland!

I have always known the value of things, loved life's luxury and ease. I was still hungering and thirsting for joy. The sybarite nature in me was clamouring aloud: "Let yourself rest, give up the fight, live as other women do, submit to injustice, find in material comfort a panacea." Cowardice wooed me. I almost succumbed.

In this room my eldest son had been born. Here love had forsaken me. Here I now stood alone. What had I come for? Was it not worth while to submit for the sake of life's ease? For no doubt were I "submissive" Allan would be "friends" with me rather than face another scandal. What could he do after all? Here was no Polly to go to, no gate to be locked in my face. Here I was at home. There were the children, but some day or other, if I managed Allan he would give them back to me. I was a bad hand at flattery, but I might try. After all, it would be easy, expedient, to tell him "I am sorry." I had said it so often, one more time did not count. . . .

On the chest of drawers in my bedroom stood a miniature. In the first years of our marriage, Allan had got a Hindu to paint it on our veranda, from a photograph of my dear mother, who was so lovely and so young when she died. He had caught her expression by looking at me—so he said. I never knew that I resembled her. I had left it behind for your father. He had always loved it. Now I again held the painting in my hand. Her eyes were looking at me, and on her sweet, proud face, there was an expression almost of disdain. She seemed to ask me if I, her daughter, would do what

was easy, in preference to what was right. I heard her voice as in the days of my childhood: "It is the difficult things which we *have* to do, not the easy ones. Duty is never free from pain." It is to her, not to myself, that I owe it that I did not falter from the purpose for which I had come.

After a little I heard the carriage wheels, and knew that your father was home. He went into his room, and gave an order to the servants. I understood at once that no one had had the courage to tell him I had arrived, not knowing what the Sahib might have wished them to do.

I opened the small gate on the veranda, and entered his room. He was lying on his long chair, the paper in his hand, just as I had seen him a thousand times. He jumped up when he saw me. We stood face to face once again.

"Is that you? Who told you to come here?"

"Yes, it is I. No one has told me to come. I came by myself. And do you know why? To ask you, as I shall ask Mrs. Martineau, by what right those letters were put into court. You know it is all a lie. How dared you do such a despicable thing? Did you ever believe I would accept it?"

"Oh! And is that the temper you have come back in?" he said. Not one word more. After all what could he have said? "*Gharry lao*," he shouted, going to the back veranda, and to the bearer who came with his tea: "Pack my things at once, and come with me."

The carriage was still before the stable, the horses were not yet taken out, so it came at once, and he drove away. The whole thing took less than ten minutes.

I afterwards learnt that your father cabled at once to Scotland, bitterly reproaching them for not having in-

formed him of my return. For once Polly had not been watchful. No one knew where I was bound for, except my solicitor, and it was not to his interest to betray it to them.

I was at home, but once again alone. Nor were things as easy as I had pictured them when I arrived. The next morning the butler told me that Allan had not only sent for the second brougham, but also that the landau had been taken away, as well as the horses. In India a carriage is a necessity, not a luxury. Of course I had credit, but all the people to whom I might have sent were under obligations to your father in some way or another. It was not to their interest to serve me; but at last I got a shabby one-horsed victoria.

My first way was to Mr. Trantham, the solicitor I had consulted before. I told him all about Mrs. Martineau's letters, and what had been done against me. He knew Mr. Annandale well. It was in his house that the conversation was supposed to have taken place between his wife and Mrs. Brunton. When we met again Mr. Trantham had ascertained that no such remarks had been made; that there had been no dinner-party even at the time mentioned. The whole thing was based on falsehood. This did not affect the slander in itself, so he told me, for in law to propagate a damaging truth only makes the offence more heinous; but it was really a gleam of happiness to know that people had not been so unkind.

"I shall raise a suit for slander against Mrs. Martineau, not in civil law—I do not want her money—but in the police court, as a criminal offence. Will you act for me?"

My passage had left me very poor, but Mr. Trantham, though a solicitor, was wonderfully disinterested. I am

convinced that, when he declined help, it was not on account of money.

"I cannot act for you. You know as well as I do that Mrs. Martineau is a friend of Lord Vernon's. You will not find a first-class firm in the whole of Calcutta to do it. You can but try."

I called upon several solicitors. They all seemed willing at first, but as soon as they knew against whom the suit was to be raised, they declined. I went back to Mr. Trantham.

"You are right," I said. "No one wants to have anything to do with the matter."

"Not only that, but you will not get a decent barrister to plead for you, leave alone the bigwigs."

"I shall plead myself."

"I will do all I can for you," said he, "only not openly. You can come when you like. I will tell you how to set about it. But look well at the thing before you start. It is not a light matter, for you will have the leading barristers against you."

"They will not be as strong as I, for I have right on my side."

The first thing I did was to write to Mrs. Martineau.

"You came to me in my desolation, professing friendship and the warmest attachment to me. Unasked, and as a token of your heartfelt sympathy, you offered to be a mediator between my husband and myself. To frighten me into accepting his impossible conditions, you said that you had heard certain disgraceful rumours against me. I have learnt that what you repeated to me as hearsay was falsely invented by you for some reason best known to yourself. You have written a letter to my husband which no woman of honour could have written

to the husband of another. This letter and our correspondence were used by my husband to deprive me of the custody of my children, and to defame me to all my acquaintances in Scotland. As soon as I saw the mischief you had wrought, I came straight to ask from you how you intend to set the matter right."

After a week I received her reply:

"I do not see how I am to blame. I was careful to tell you at the time that I was only repeating on hearsay what certain ladies had said at a dinner-party where your conduct was the subject of unfavourable comment. I am extremely displeased that Mr. Montrose should have made such use of the letters, but you must remember that you asked me to send them to him."

XLII

"Et tu ne savais pas qu'il était sur la terre
Des amis inconnus qui te tendaient la main."

DISLOYALTY to a task implies for me a certain dishonour. Nature has been generous in giving me enthusiasm, confidence in myself, and implicit faith in the justice of the cause I take up. These forces sweep difficulties from my path, and spur me on when I loiter. To this fount I once again turned in my solitude, which was to be great—at least for a time.

When I awoke the second morning after my arrival, I thought everything was very still. From the veranda

I could not see the gardeners, always so busy at this early hour. I went to the back veranda and called Hamal, Mussal, Butler, Chuprassi—each of them in turn. There was no reply. You remember, *chérie*, we sometimes wondered how *Dornröschen's* enchanted palace looked before thorns and thistles overgrew it. I fancy, just like our Indian home on that morning. I understood at last. They had all abandoned me. Your father had taken them away, hoping I might go myself. For a minute it seemed rather a difficult position, to be quite alone in an Indian bungalow, where everything is open.

I do not mean to be cynical when I say that after a meal I am always better able to cope with difficulties. Our soul, child, sometimes soars towards the Infinite, but our feet are always on the ground. I decided I must have breakfast at once. But how? I can put my hand to almost everything, and had made my Portuguese cook a *cordon bleu*. For years now I have done my own cooking, and love it. But here it is a very different thing from preparing food in an Indian kitchen, with only the most primitive appliances, a fire which burns in open holes, and is fed by long, heavy logs. I did not even know how to kindle it. I remembered my mother's injunction to the vain little girl whom her brothers and sisters called "Princess Boumfia," because she had the art of making even the servants do all sorts of things for her which the others had to do for themselves. The guardian angel of my life had so often told me: "*Il n'y a pas de sot métier, il n'y a que de sottes gens*," that I felt I must try to get out of this impasse. But how, I wondered?

Whilst I was debating my old *dhobi* arrived, looking about as if afraid.

“And so you have remained, Bapoo?” feeling truly relieved to see one familiar face.

“All gone. The Sahib telling us all come! But I say the Madam Sahib like clean clothes.” Then falling back into the vernacular, he related that the others had tried to take the iron out of his hand, and pull him away, but that he had stuck to his post, telling them the Madam Sahib had given him all the clothes she had brought from the steamer, and he could not leave until they were done.

“I stay with Madam Sahib. I do not mind pay,” he said, and seldom have I felt so proud of any offering.

When out pig-sticking or living in tents, I had seen native servants accomplish wonderful feats, but this man had never in his life done housework. He evidently understood by instinct what this abandonment implied, for to my great relief he suddenly said:

“I making tea, Madam Sahib, breakfast.”

He lighted the fire. Coffee and tea were there, eggs and fruit he brought from somewhere. He never in his life, I am sure, had laid a table, though he may have noticed how it looked in passing. Yet when I was dressed and sat down for breakfast, nothing was wanting. The man in his *langotee*, short white jacket and *pugri* with long ends, served me as if he had done nothing else all his life. It was such a comfort to have one human soul beside me, and made things look far less desperate.

When I had finished I went out to get servants from the “highways and hedges.” In two or three days I succeeded in replacing them all, all except the gardeners. The garden dry and the flowers withering seemed in unison with my state of mind. Why should Nature

202 A MOTHER IN EXILE

look smiling at me, as in the days of love and happiness, now that everything around me was desolate?

Did I not tell you that truth is not as simple as it seems to most people, nor do falsehoods always appear as despicable as they are, for the world has invented many palliatives.

The first thing to do was to proceed against Mrs. Martineau. It seemed such plain sailing; there was not the least fear in my mind but that a summons would be granted at once. I have not always been so unsuccessful as I was in Scotland. I have accomplished almost all I attempted, because from the moment I set myself to it, I never doubted I should succeed.

The magistrate listened so sympathetically and attentively that I felt sure of success; but when I had finished he ruled that the communications were "privileged."

"The words may be terrible," he said when I rose to go, "but no one who knows you will believe them. Take my advice and let the matter drop."

My whole being burnt with indignation, for I had believed I should only have to expose my wrong to obtain redress. How could a base falsehood, invented by Mrs. Martineau, and told to my husband, be "privileged"? And what law could ever make of slander a right enjoyed by one to turn as a deadly weapon against another?

Since law is a quibble, I would understand it myself before trying to convince a magistrate that right was on my side. I would set about it in earnest, go back to Mr. Riddle with some new and weighty arguments; no longer appeal with impassioned words, full of what I believed was right, but set before him plain facts and ask him to dispense the law.

A few days after my arrival, Mr. Raymond Joscelyn

had called, and remained for lunch. "Passing through," as he told me, he came to chat with me for an hour. He had not inquired after Allan, and I did not speak of things too painful to touch upon. We parted, hoping to meet at Simla or perhaps before. His coming left me stronger and less desolate, but after all what could he do for me? I felt ashamed to tell him about Scotland, the case I had lost, and those terrible letters. As to the magistrate's court, the disinclination to go there was as great as when Dr. Linder first spoke of it. I could imagine the expression of disgusted surprise which would come over Mr. Joscelyn's thoughtful face. In his bearing, by every one of his words, he showed me deference and admiration, which was doubly welcome now in my utter desolation, with the stigma which seemed to cling to me, produced by that odious slander.

None of the English papers reproduced what had passed before the magistrate, but those in vernacular had full accounts. I wondered if Mr. Joscelyn had seen them. He better than any might have advised me how to act, but I could not find the courage to ask him. In his last letter not a word had indicated that even a breath of the scandal had come to him. "I send you the last volume of Verlaine," he wrote. "Tell me what you think of the poem I have marked." I felt I had not the courage to write about proceedings in police courts to the lover of Verlaine's exquisite lines:

*"Je fais souvent ce rêve étrange et pénétrant
D'une femme inconnue, et que j'aime et qui m'aime,
Son nom? Je me souviens qu'il est doux et sonore
Comme ceux des aimées que la vie exila.
Et pour sa voix, lointaine et calme et grave, elle a
L'inflexion des voix chères qui se sont tuées."*

During the weeks which followed I believed myself forgotten by all. Except for Mr. Joscelyn's solitary visit, no one came to see me. Life's reality held me in its grip. There seemed nowhere to turn to, when a big parcel arrived from the bookseller's, containing Blake Odgers' famous work "On Slander," and another authority, Folkard. Only much later I ascertained that Mr. Joscelyn had sent me the volumes. Lucid and incisive, they became a staff for me to lean upon.

From the very first I gathered that a married woman, being considered in law a minor, no redress was possible in a civil action without her husband; for unless under special settlements, she has no status in law. Many years have gone since then, child, and I have tried so hard to forget that I am no longer able to tell you all this in the correct legal language; but all this matters little. The more I pondered over what I read, the more I felt that a large wall was built up before me. With the greatest effort I climbed up a few inches during the day, and lo! overnight, invisible hands had built it up higher than ever before. When I was tempted to lose courage, which happened often, I would tell myself:

"This is no use. You have no one but yourself to look to. Study those books. You won't be able to understand them all at once, but keep up your spirit. They would not have come to you in so unhoped-for a way, unless they were to help you."

XLIII

My studies were progressing all the time. I often began at four in the morning; at nine I had my breakfast; worked again until eleven. My drive in the evening—I felt I must go out to keep up my health—was my only diversion. At night when the servants had gone away, my lamp would burn late on the lonely dark veranda. I had been *nerveuse* in olden days. When your father was away, the servants had to sleep before my bedroom doors. Now I no longer minded. Often in the middle of the night I would take my candlestick and walk through the solitary rooms, picturing to myself how it had looked when Allan and my little sons had been there—not forgetting you either, *mignonne*. Letters from Madam de Saint-Jean were always telling me about you. There had been renewed endeavours to get possession of you. “It might have been better if Reine had gone with you. What shall I do if they come and take her away by force?” I had no news from Montfort and Laurent. They did not write to me.

The more I studied the law on slander, the more complicated I found it. Telling me the “privileged letters” had been written in “good faith,” the magistrate dismissed my second application.

The monsoon broke. Vegetation began to spring up luxuriously, and the garden looked weird, with grass and weeds growing on the paths. The bungalow took the appearance of those deserted places which once held love and happiness, and whence the occupants have

fled, having no longer the courage to live there alone with the ghosts of the past. Sometimes when Mr. Joscelyn's letters came, my thoughts would turn towards him.

I was far less unhappy than perhaps you would picture to yourself, my own little girl. Strange as you may think it—I myself wondered when this new interest entered my life—the study of the law books completely absorbed me. In former days, when I had not been too entirely buried in my own selfish love and happiness, I sometimes had regretted not having continued my medical studies. I was now learning day by day what a wonderful thing the past is; how old traditions overshadow all the conquests of the present; above all, how essential it is for the progress of the world that woman should understand what affects her so closely, study law, plead as a barrister, dispense it as a judge. It is only a woman who can understand woman, and feel for her. The rules of a community, far-reaching, of such vital importance to the individual, cannot, must not, be dispensed by one section only, leaving the other to submit blindly, without any voice in the framing or dispensing of them. I suffered from injustice and tyranny, but there were millions of women as unjustly dealt with as I was.

The thought of success lifted me beyond the *misères* of the hour. The study of my two authorities was no longer a toil, but a real pleasure. The facts I began to wring from them changed my position *du tout au tout*. Doubt was no longer possible. It was now the moment to appeal finally to the magistrate. He also would be convinced.

Nevertheless, when I went to Calcutta for the third time, he again dismissed my application.

I do not believe in the finality of things. It is not that I do not care, child—I care tremendously. In my defeats, despair grips me at the two shoulders, shakes me and makes me feel sick to death, but I know what a bad friend despair is. When things seem beyond hope, I appeal to courage. It comes back to me, and in the dark night its light burns brighter than ever.

After I left the court, I stood at the open window in the corridor and looked down upon the motley crowd below. Wondering what the next step would be, I suddenly heard someone speaking to me, and saw a tall Hindu with the look and bearing of a “high-caste” Rajput. On his *pugri* there was an aigrette set with diamonds. Costly jewels covered his silk dress.

“What do you want?” I asked. “I do not know you.”

“I have many cases in court”—this I could believe, for Hindus have a mania for litigation—“Will you be my *vakil*? I will pay you what you like.”

“Who told you I can plead?”

“My men knew about it and called me. I was in the court listening all the time. You speak well, Madam Sahib, and will not allow the Magistrate Sahib to close your mouth until he has heard all you have come to tell him. I wish you to carry on my law-suits. I know you will win.”

“I cannot be of any use to you. No woman under the English Raj can plead, except for herself. In my country, for I am French, there are women barristers. But did you not see that I lost my case? How could you trust me to win yours?”

“You have lost this time. But you will win in the end. This is not final, though the Magistrate Sahib said it was. You will now go to the High Court and

208 A MOTHER IN EXILE

upset his judgment. Oh! Madam Sahib, I am indeed very sorry that you cannot be my *vakil*, you would have won all my cases."

And with many salaams the resplendent Rajah left me, much comforted.

XLIV

. . . . "But whatso'er thine ill,
It must be borne, and these wild starts are useless."

I NEVER for one moment contemplated giving up the fight. I still felt convinced that justice would be done to me finally, even if I had to go to the House of Lords for it.

I do not know how it had become known that I contemplated appealing against the magistrate's decision, but all the leading barristers told me they held a brief against me. It was evidently the day of retainers, for I was told by several that one had reached them that very morning. I spent almost four days on the useless chase for one. It was Saturday, once again Saturday; and nothing further to be done, except to brood over my disappointment.

On the Sunday two cables came from Madame de Saint-Jean, one asking for final instructions how to act; for a solicitor, accompanied by his wife, had come from Scotland to take you away, your father having sent to the court a certificate from Dr. Linder, saying that you were perfectly able to live in Scotland. This telegram was dated the previous day. The second told me that you had been taken away. Even now, after years, when

I look back and remember that hour, my pen refuses to go on.

In the afternoon after I heard you had been taken from me, I drove to the Gardens, for I felt I must do something. Brilliant sunshine had followed the rain of the morning. The alleys, shaded by big banyan and tamarind trees, lay in a semi-obscurity with a warm, dense haze floating in them, which the soil, full of the moisture of the constant rain, threw up under the rays of the sun. The visitors being busy with the sights, all lay quiet and deserted. I was walking aimlessly when, turning a corner, I stood face to face with Allan.

My mind, being bent only on one subject, my thoughts of late had lingered less often upon him, though in a subconscious way he was always present in my mind. At times I had tried to make myself believe that I no longer mourned having lost him. Had someone asked me if I still loved him, I would have said "No, a thousand times no." But the presence of the one we care for destroys every argument and make-believe. Seeing him again—though the four months which followed my return lay between us—I knew he was still the one the world held for me.

For one short moment we both stopped. The mad impulse seized me to fall down before him, surround him with my arms and entreat: "For our love's sake, for the sake of all that was once so dear, let us cease the strife. Take me back into your arms. Let me stop there. I love you, I cannot live without you."

The longing was at once checked, and not by pride. A great fear cast its spell upon me. Incapable of moving, I began to tremble from head to foot.

There are times when the agonies of a lifetime press into an instant, when our mind prophetically foresees the

future. That moment held the presentiment of the tragic hour which was to separate us for ever, the fearful conviction that this was only the walking phantom of the Allan I loved, in whose arms I had lain—that he and I could never be lovers again. The air around me seemed full of blackness. When I looked again, he was gone.

The following morning I resumed my studies, which had become my sole interest in life. It was for me to prove of what metal I was made. It would be useless to start on my calvary again to-morrow, see all those men, ask them to help me, hear their refusal—go through it all again. No, I must help myself, go alone to the Hight Court, fight out my case. In the meantime? Well—believe in my success.

A little more than three days were left, and every hour had become valuable, for I was writing out a speech to read to the judges. I had been told there would be two. Those I had seen in Scotland had struck me as impersonal, utterly devoid of any human feeling, incapable of understanding the failings of weak humanity. Greatness, which one surely might expect in a man set to judge his fellows, has always implied for me strength united to sympathetic understanding of the weakness of others, mind and heart combined, "*car toutes les grandes pensées viennent au cœur*"—instead of which I had stood before the cold stare of mere figure-heads who had not tried to comprehend, not even taken the trouble to listen, but administered a law which had crushed me. Oh! the hideous hours I had spent in the Scotch Courts, nothing could be worse than those! Come what may, it could not be as bad!

I filled whole pages, wrote and re-wrote them. Everything was clear to me—no doubt I should be able to

make it so to the judges, and find in myself the courage for the ordeal. "*A cœur vaillant rien n'est impossible*" was as true to me then as when Jeanne d'Albret said it to her son.

I was much concerned to know before which judges I should appear. A dispenser of the law now assumed for me quite another significance. I wondered if those Scotch judges ever chatted and laughed like other men, if they had wives and children, or if they passed through life austere, cold, heartless—very well versed evidently in the law; but this seemed to me, who smarted under its injustice, a very small accomplishment indeed.

I took with me the two big law books, innumerable papers with notes, and my speech. In the veranda of the law courts I met many barristers; among them some I had entreated to help me. I bowed to them, and it seemed to me as if they bore a sheepish look.

The two judges were waiting for me in a hall where I had not been before. They were strangers to me, and I felt rather lost in the large space with only the servant whom I had brought to carry my books. I undid my bundle of papers, put my authorities to my left, and took my speech in hand. I did not look at it, I spoke out of the fulness of my heart, as soon as one of the arbiters of my Fate told me they were ready to listen.

"By my right as a British subject I have come to you, my Lords," I began, "asking you to dispense integrally the justice which is due indiscriminately to high and low. I appeal from the magistrate's decision on an information filed by me against Mrs. Martineau, charging her with having maliciously published a defamatory libel which she knew to be false and of her own fabrication. It is contained in a letter she wrote to my husband. The magistrate found that to slander a wife to her hus-

band is a sacred and vital civic right protected by the law. He called it 'privilege.' This letter and others which she handed to him were used against me in the Scotch Courts, and deprived me of the custody of my children during their father's absence.

"There is a high wall between those cold, heartless judges in Scotland and human suffering; but you are different. You will listen to me, for I have to *convince* you that English law does not consider it a 'privilege' to slander a wife to her husband. I entreat you, my Lords, to listen attentively to me."

I laid all my points carefully before them, I proved my case fully.

"I do not come here to seek redress as a wife living in wedlock—a minor in law. I come to you as a deserted wife. In the long fierce battle I have had to take my stand alone, but at least it is law that my husband's desertion has destroyed my legal inability, as death would have done, and made me before the law of England a free woman."

I stood breathless, waiting for the fiat. My life hung in the balance. It was only for moments, but they seemed hours.

The presiding judge spoke at last:

"We must call upon the other side to show cause, and thank you for having brought the matter to our notice."

I did not understand. Someone behind me said:

"Let me congratulate you. No one could have done better."

When I turned round, I recognised one of the leading barristers. There was a hum of hundreds of voices, and the large hall was packed with men in black. They

crowded round me and when, bewildered, I asked what the judges had decided, they told me that an order had been issued for a rule *nisi*, calling upon Mrs. Martineau to show cause against the prayer of the petition.

My task was ended and successfully ended. I had won my case and could now prove to all those who might believe in the vile accusation, that it was without a spark of truth. Mrs. Martineau, I was told, would plead that I had asked her to hand our correspondence to Allan. It would be rather difficult for her to prove this, since the letters were written after our last interview, and contained no such request. "There was no possibility of failing at the final hearing, the case was practically won on all its issues," so the barristers told me—the only woman among all those men. Counsels and solicitors whom I had never seen before offered me their services, help or advice. I felt dazed. Those who still followed me, I dismissed with:

"Another time. I must now be alone."

When I reached the flight of stone steps at the entrance, the bearer who was carrying my books put them down suddenly, and waving both hands, shouted: "*Djeeta, djeeta!*" (she is alive) at the top of his voice. I became aware that thousands of natives had gathered, and that his gesture was to tell them I had won.

I cannot tell you if they understood what I was doing in the Law Courts, but I am sure I felt their thoughts and kind wishes with me, whilst I stood before the judges. I wondered at the time, and still ask myself, in what mysterious way they had gathered there whilst I was fighting my battle. It may be that some I had been fortunate enough to help knew that their "Mother" was in great distress.

My triumph was short-lived, and went as it had come.

A great despair, an unspeakable feeling of the emptiness of all things came down upon me. What was the use of it all, since Allan no longer loved me?

Had I failed in my endeavors, I know I should only have added this disappointment to so many others, found in myself the courage to go on. But now that the result I had striven for with all the might of my being had been gained, I asked myself what the success was really worth? It was built on the ashes of our past, of our love itself. I could not share the victory with Allan. On the contrary, it was one drop more added to the bitter cup I was drinking alone. I suddenly understood that I would willingly give up all I had gained, give it up a thousand times, sacrifice everything—life itself—if only I might hold Love once again in my arms. If Love would but return, forgive us both for our forsaking his trysting-places, where once we had wound wreaths with the flowers he offered. Oh! that Love might have compassion with my pain!

The memories of the days when he and I had loved, like big waves, drowned the sorrows of the present. As a flame which destroys everything on its path, the longing for him, my own love, swept away all I had suffered.

"Drive to the Sahib's office," I said to the coachman as soon as the train reached the station.

XLV

I SEEM to remember that the guards before the building put forward their bayonets to prevent me from entering. I only know that I walked straight through and went upstairs to the room where my coming once had been a

joy. The door was closed. The sepoys stood before it, forming a chain. I learnt afterwards that Allan, ever since he deserted me, had dreaded that I would call at his office, and given orders accordingly. He knew me little indeed.

I went to the next room, which stood open, as rooms always do in India. It was occupied by a young official whom I knew well, but had not seen for more than a year.

"Will you go and tell my husband that I am here?"

I knew that the task I laid upon him was not an easy one, but he did not hesitate.

"I will go at once. You should have come here long ago." That was all he said.

I never knew what passed between the two men. When Mr. Dunkirk came back, I read on his face that weighty words had been spoken: which some have the courage to say, in spite of prospects, promotion, and such things which bind and gag most souls.

"Mr. Montrose waits for you. Will you come?" And showing me to the door of communication between the two rooms, he closed it as I passed through.

He stood beside his writing-table. I fell down on my knees before him.

"Allan, I have tried, but it is impossible. I cannot live without you. It is I, your own Eleonore, who entreats you. Take me back to your heart."

He appeared moved. "This is not your place," he said, bending down and taking me up in his arms.

There was grief, compassion too, I believed, in his manner. After so many long months, we were again together, husband and wife. The solemn moment seemed as if it would bury the feud for ever.

216 A MOTHER IN EXILE

"Go home," he said after a little. "We cannot speak here. Come to-night to Mr. Bandy's. There we will talk matters over."

"Will you not come to the bungalow? Will you not come home? There is nothing to settle. I leave everything to you."

Reluctance, fear, displeasure took away the expression of sympathy I thought I had read in your father's face.

"Why do you always want something different?"

His voice sounded irritated.

I trembled for fear of having displeased him. Had I forgotten how to speak to him? I had been so long alone. So much time had passed—more than a year. I must find the way back to his heart.

"If you wish it, naturally I shall come. Will you return home with me to-night? Oh! come, Allan. I so long to have you back. Do come, Allan!"

"I do not think. . . . In any case not just yet. . . . No, not to-night. . . . We will see about that another time. Later on, perhaps. . . . Come and see me. We will arrange about your going to Europe."

"To the children?"

"I cannot speak of those things yet."

His words crushed me. Had joy and hope only come to mock and then again abandon me? But I must not give way. I had said I would put myself into his hands. It was the moment to prove that I was sincere. All might still come right, if only I had patience.

"I will do what you wish, Allan, and call to-night after dinner. But do not let Mr. Bandy be there. Let us be alone."

Thus we parted. He opened the door for me into the

landing, knocking down the sepoys who were still defending it.

In the evening I went to Mr. Bandy's. Allan received me in the veranda.

It had all seemed so easy in the morning, now everything had become difficult again. Little was said. Nor did he reproach me much—your father was a man of few words. I did not dare to touch upon what I had suffered. I only wept—wept terribly, as I do not remember ever having done before. My heart seemed as if it would break, and as if nothing could ever comfort it again. I knelt down before an armchair, and sobbed aloud beside your father.

My body seemed to burn like fire, though I shivered with cold. I felt utterly, unspeakably miserable. All kinds of physical pains were devouring me. I felt strangely ill—I who had never known an ache, except when my children were born—so ill that it frightened me. Raging fever consumed every fibre of my being. Every pore of my body was a sore. Inch by inch, I was dying from different hurts.

I was filled with an unknown longing for someone—I no longer even cared who it might be—to hold me in his arms and rest my poor throbbing head and heart against him. Or—since there was no longer anyone who wanted me—if only I might go away somewhere, forget as I was forgotten. The pains grew more and more acute with every moment that passed. Oh! that I might flee, lie alone, deeply buried in a wood; feel, as I slept, cool shadows enfolding me, the harmony of the universe rocking me to rest.

I do not know what Allan thought. He did not speak. At last he said:

"Why do you lie weeping on the ground? You had better sit in the armchair."

"I must go home, Allan, I feel strangely ill. At last life has vanquished me. Let us go home together." And seeing a denial written on his face: "If I die to-night, you will be sorry that you let me go alone. Just this once, come back with me."

"You will be all right to-morrow, I have no fear. I cannot come. I had better send for the carriage."

"I do not know how I shall ever reach home. I feel so ill. Let me stay here."

"That is impossible. We have no right to intrude upon Mr. Bandy."

"Take me to your own room, Allan. Let me sleep beside you. I will be quite still—not utter a word. Let me only feel that we are together. This alone will make me well. I feel so ill. Oh, Allan, I so want you!"

It was not to be.

XLVI

I WOKE up in the middle of the night unable to move. My limbs felt like lead. "It is all fancy," I said to myself as so often before when dreadful things happened in my dream. "Wake up, pull yourself together, and you will see it is only imagination." This time, however, all my efforts were vain. I touched my lower limbs—there was no sensation in them, I was powerless to drag myself even to the side of the bed. I knew too much about medicine not to understand—I was paralysed from the waist downwards.

I felt inexpressibly tired, so weary of anything and everything that, strange as it may seem to you, instead of a terrible shock it was at the first moment almost an agreeable feeling to know that there were no more struggles in store for me, that the world's strife and I had done with one another. This lasted but an instant, then the horror of it flashed upon me. In the fulness of my power, with life and love still before me—for I had found Allan again, and knew I should never cease to love him—I was felled like a tree by lightning; and before me lay the long years to come.

Was it credible that I should never again be able to move about, take my place among others in the arena of life; living, be cut off from this beautiful world and all the happiness it still held in store for me; never, as in the days of old, go about with Allan or enjoy life with my children? I had put aside the thought of you three during the last months, even hidden your photographs—my heart had so ached when I looked at them.

Though I had been very tired the night before, I still had found the strength to take my darlings from the drawer, and place them round my mother's miniature on the table beside me. It stood inside the mosquito-house. At last I managed to drag myself to the edge of the bed and light a candle. There you were all four looking at me. I had been disappointed, very disappointed, that Allan had not come home with me; but driving back, I had thought about you, and at once begun to wreathe fancies of what the years would bring. Now everything had come to a violent end.

You three were smiling at me, as I had told you to do when the photographs were taken. I thought with a pang that none of you had written to me. You had not longed to do so. Had your heart prompted you to

speak to me, a thousand Pollies could not have prevented it. Had even one of you told her that you loved me, that longing impelled the child to his mother—I do not think even she could have held you back. I was at the age you were then, Reine, and you are five years younger than Montfort, when an occasion arose to prove my loyalty to my mother. I did my duty, suffered heavily in consequence, but I did it well.

Cela tient de race, as some say. Where has all the heroism gone which those old Huguenots showed—my people and yours? They did heroic deeds for their faith's sake. Was not one of you capable of doing something for love's sake—for the sake of that instinct which brings back the most uncultured, the most primitive, to the mother?

My thoughts turned uneasily to her who ever inspired me with courage in the difficult hours. She also had suffered physically for years, suffered terribly before she died, but always had been brave and serene. I had seen many suffer, it is true, but never as she did, with the smile on her lips, and the brave, fearless glance which so often brought solace to others. I would do as she had done, appeal to her remembrance, to my will-power, and bear in a befitting manner whatever there was to be borne. Do not think it was easy. It seems a small matter when put on paper, but reality is always greater, and different from what it is described.

XLVII

"Bold is the donkey-driver, O Khedive, and bold is the Khedive who dares to say what he will believe and what disbelieve, not knowing in any wise the mind of Allah, not knowing in any wise his own heart, and what it shall some day suffer."

Soon after dawn the *ayah* came to receive my orders. I sent a note at once to Dr. Beauchamp. I would rather have called in Dr. Linder, but I owed him a grudge for having given the certificate which facilitated your being taken away from Madame de Saint-Jean.

I did not believe for one moment that he could cure me. No one could help me, except I myself. I was sure that unless a wonder happened, I should never again be able to move. Grief after grief had crowded into the last months, the strain had been a prolonged one. I had presumed too much upon my strength, and had been knocked down by the blows of adversity—just like a very ordinary woman.

Dr. Beauchamp thought me, I am sure, an extraordinary being. He put endless questions, but did not seem able to understand how I had lived alone all those months and how I should do now, only surrounded by native servants.

"Let me send you a nurse. But Mr. Montrose will come, now that you are so ill. Have you written to him?"

"No, I intend you to do so. Do not trouble about a hospital nurse, my *ayah* will do very well. As to the

servants, I can easily manage them from my bed. They are fond of me, and obedient."

The doctor—for I was going to be a good patient in more senses than one—came back in the afternoon, and told me he had seen Allan. He came daily afterwards. I drank medicine by the quart, and ointments of every kind were applied. As I had nothing to do, his orders were faithfully carried out, and the *ayah*, with that wonderful gift of native women, massaged me twice daily.

Allan called on the third day. I asked him if he had seen Dr. Beauchamp, but not why he had allowed so much time to pass. He was greatly disappointed at seeing me so ill, and I understood that it was not because he felt sorry, but that he had wished me to leave by next mail for Europe. I seemed vaguely to remember that he had spoken of it the evening I called upon him. Our meeting was a strange one. Only a few days had passed since we became reconciled, friends again, yet it was as if two strangers met. I do not know if the incongruity of the situation flashed upon him, I lying in the large bed, incapable of moving even a toe, and he sitting beside me like a casual caller. He was polite, amiable, courteous, but there was not one word of regret or sympathy, nothing to tell me he was grieved. There was nothing, absolutely nothing, which betrayed the least emotion. He did not inquire if I had any money, and made no remarks except to ask how I got so ill. There was really little to say that he did not know; and if he was ignorant of it, all my telling would be of no use. A thousand questions were seething in me, but the wild, passionate longing for him seemed to have gone. Had it ever been there, I wondered. I believe I felt relieved when he went.

The days followed one after the other, and they were

not so bad as you might fancy. That I had won my case had travelled through India, and letters were pouring in. People whom I did not know, of whom I had never heard before, were writing to congratulate me on what I had done, and to wish me every success in finishing my case. Leading barristers offered me their services, saying they would fight for me and end the affair in a worthy and befitting manner. The story of my suffering, of my vain attempts and successful appeal, seemed to have opened in sympathy the hearts of strangers, who were full of that interest which it is the privilege of one human being to give to another.

Mrs. Martineau had enemies, or there was a shadow in her life—*il vaut mieux ne pas approfondir*. One day a registered packet arrived from Madras. It contained documents which, if made public, would have ruined her. This was not my intention, but of course I took the necessary steps to carry on my case. It was all very easy now.

I had never been indifferent towards the problem of life, but, a true child of my country, I do not brood over things which have to be accepted. I was preparing myself, not for death, for this seemed very distant, but for life as an invalid, and endeavoring to convince my rebellious spirit that only in accepting joyfully should I be able to bear. I cannot say the days were long. They were full of beautiful things to read; and of remembering them to myself when I was lying still. I had had a marvellous memory in my youth; after reading two or three times a page of prose I knew it by heart. It is with the mind as Boileau says of style:

“Vingt fois sur le métier remettez votre ouvrage,
Polissez-le sans cesse, et le repolissez.”

Mine had lain fallow for years, but as soon as I applied myself seriously it regained its former elasticity. All I read attentively my memory kept, and at night all those beautiful things, verses or exquisite French prose, would come back to me to be enjoyed one by one like pearls unstrung.

XLVIII

I HAD need of this comfort, for the time from sunset to sunrise was terrible. I suffered mentally during the day, but in the solitude of the night, I often felt as if I could not bear to remain motionless any longer. The doctor came daily and was doing all he could, though from the first he told me frankly that the "Faculty" could do little for me. One afternoon he said all his remedies were exhausted and thought I might be better in a more bracing climate.

"Did Mr. Montrose tell you to suggest this to me?"

"Well, no. Yes. He thinks, as I do, it would be better for you."

I had not the least wish or intention of going to Europe. Madame de Saint-Jean's was the only place I might have gone to, and I could not bear the thought of going back to the home where I had lived a happy girl and left a joyous bride, now that love was wrecked. To Dr. Beauchamp I only said:

"It may be best after all. The next time Mr. Montrose comes, I shall talk the matter over with him."

When he had gone, I waited for Allan, for I expected him that day. His visits were again bringing a little

joy, and sometimes he would remain longer than the ten minutes he allowed himself. He had already spoken of sending me to Europe, with two nurses, one to take care of me, the other to amuse me, but I had replied:

"Since I have to be ill, at least let me be ill at home."

And when he had persisted, emphatically describing the advantages I should reap, I had merely shaken my head:

"It is no use insisting, Allan. Nothing will induce me to leave my home."

"But I am your husband. You would have to go if I wished it."

"We will not discuss it," I had said calmly. "You know you cannot force me. Nor do I think you would wish to."

These were the only vexatious words which passed, and even in so calling them, I give them too much importance. Allan had strangely changed. At times I wondered what powerful influence had worked upon him, so that even to me he no longer seemed the same man. Polly's baneful sway did not seem strong enough to have altered him so entirely. There was no question between us of his coming back, nor did he ever speak about our children. All three were now with the woman whose only wish in life has been to harm us, so as to fulfil her selfish aims. When the thoughts of you came, I sent them away. I could not speak to him about you. There beside him—strangers who had once been lovers—with the burning memory of those children, our love-tokens, between us, of what use were words? The spell which held us together was, I believed, no more the longing of the flesh, the passionate desire to be enfolded in his embrace, but the love for my children, of whom the law made him sole guardian. One long cry of agony

might have given relief to my pain, but I felt afraid—afraid of myself, and never uttered it. When I looked at him, sitting calmly beside my bed, telling me that there was much unrest in the bazaar, that a rising between Mussulmans and Hindus was daily feared, that the monsoon was good, the crops plentiful, and many people inquired after me, it seemed that I was no longer nailed down to my bed, but somewhere, far away from all I had known and loved, I was sitting beside a grave winding wreaths. In it were my children, and the sorrow which, ghost-like, haunted me when my heart cried for you. But all this I never told with a word or sign to him who held you in his keeping.

It was not that he loved you. False husband, lover, and friend, he was false as father too. Had he cared, he would never have taken you from me, for love has an intuition of its own, and sees clearly the welfare of the beloved. He admired as much as I did the frank, fearless lads who sometimes came from an English public school to spend a winter with their parents. They resembled in nothing those shrinking, disloyal sons of ours, brought up by an old maid who had destroyed all the fair promises which the future should have realised. I wish I could believe even now that he did not see *ce qui sautait aux yeux*. No, he knew it as well as I did, but never having loved either of you, he was indifferent as to what might become of his children; you were only a weapon against me. When I look back, I understand that he had to keep up the pretence he started in Scotland to justify having vilified me. It was not easy now to retract and say to the sycophants who flattered him to gain their own selfish ends:

“It is true that I wish to get rid of her. You cannot wonder at that, since you powerfully assisted to bring

it about. But at least let me tell you that all I said was a lie. Never by word or deed has she shown herself unworthy of the highest prerogatives as wife and mother. It is not her fault that I no longer love her."

There are men who have undone, as far as lay in their power, the mischief they had wrought, but they were cast in a different mould from your father. He no longer had the courage to do it.

My case was to be heard in the High Court. I did not need to trouble that I was unable to conduct it myself, for there was no longer any dearth of barristers. My solicitor had just left me, after having taken my final instructions, when Lord Vernon's card was brought to me. I at once understood why he had come.

"Give the Lord Sahib my *bôt salaam*, and show him in."

I liked Lord Vernon, and knew him well. He had often been our guest. I felt sure he was grieved that his honest intentions had been so frustrated by the mischief others had wrought. He at least had meant well.

He started the conversation by speaking about indifferent subjects, my health and the weather.

"Since you are kept to your bed, it is a great pity that you cannot be at some hill-station."

"It is kind of you to have come," I said, plunging at once into the heart of things. "I am very sorry for your sake, Lord Vernon, that things between Mrs. Martineau and me have come to this point; but there is nothing else to do."

"It was a painful surprise to all of us, that Mr. Montrose produced my letters and those of Mrs. Martineau in court against you. He was very wrong."

"There was nothing in yours which could possibly have harmed me. It was unfortunate that it was used

in connection with hers, though I agree with you that to make use of them was unwarranted. But I forgive even less that Mrs. Martineau wrote to my husband as she did."

"And what does he intend doing now? I hear that you are reconciled. Is he not living with you? And what does he say about the case?"

"We have never discussed these things, never once spoken about the suit. It is going to be heard next week."

"Yes, I know. I met Mr. Parry driving along the road when I came. All this is very sad indeed."

Beside me, just as they had come, were the compromising papers. I took them from their envelope, and handed them to Lord Vernon. Their contents were no secret to him.

"Will you read these?" I asked.

He took them to the open window-door, and when he had perused, returned them. As he came back I noticed that he dragged his feet as if they were too heavy to lift.

"Will they be used?" he asked.

"No, I am fighting Mrs. Martineau to win back my children. I am not a woman who finds pleasure in ruining others."

He was silent for a few moments, and the fine old face quivered.

"Can nothing persuade you to stop the proceedings and avoid all this scandal?"

"Nothing, unless my husband comes back to me."

Lord Vernon was deeply moved, and after a few more words he left me.

The next time Allan came he seemed more interested in my doings. He looked at the books on my table, and asked me to read him something aloud, as I often

had done in the olden days, but I felt I had not the power and might break down. Above all, I did not want him to know how unhappy I was. The little hymn-book—your last present to me—was open at the place which was so full of memories, for it took me back to the day my sons had come to the hotel. Your father was absolutely without religion, still spiritual things had a certain power over him. After glancing at the book and reading on the fly-leaf the words my little daughter had traced: "*Pour petite mère, de sa fillette,*" he closed it again.

"You were ever an idealist, Eleonore, and you have not changed." Then abruptly: "Would it give you pleasure if I came back?"

I am afraid I was too moved to speak at first, but I at once understood that Lord Vernon had brought pressure to bear upon him.

"Are you really coming back, Allan?" I said when I had regained my composure. "I believe that would put me right. And when are you coming?"

"I cannot tell you the exact day. I have to settle some things with Mr. Bandy, but you can rely that it will be at least in a fortnight. I saw Mr. Parry leaving you the other day. I will send him up to settle about the case in the High Court. Let those things now rest."

"Since you are coming back, you can write and tell Mrs. Martineau that I withdraw the case."

"I will do so at once. I have already written offering to pay her legal expenses. You have wasted a great deal of money, Eleonore, with all those law proceedings," Allan said calmly.

"It was not my doing. Your father began, and there was nothing else for me to do. But why speak about

those things now? Nothing can change them. Do you not think so?"

This was the only time, until much later, that he and I referred to the past.

He remained longer that day, and I sometimes surprised his eyes wandering over me, as if he had never seen me before. So he had looked at me when first we met. Perhaps from all that once had been ours, some fragment had remained after all, and was drawing his soul back to mine—so at least I then thought, and wondered if happiness might come back with his presence.

At last he said: "How strange! Your hair has grown white at the left temple."

"Have you no idea how it came?" was all I found to say, and he did not reply.

His coming and going that day moved me. Something indefinable drew heart and soul back to the past. How I must have loved that man! since after all those humiliations, privations, insults, the world only held him for me, and the thought of his coming made me tremble for joy. All my life, I knew, was still centred in him; he was, and ever would be, my heart's one desire. In the happy days of old, I had never asked myself if he knew how much I loved him, and I had not yet learnt that such things can only be understood by the heart, and that his had ceased to beat for me.

I seem to myself now a weak and foolish woman, but did I not tell you that it is impossible to define the impulses which prompt us? I only remember that I thought how good it was of Allan to return, for it would be very trying for him to have me always ill. He so hated sickness, he who was always well. I felt a new impetus to be cured, were it only for his sake, but my limbs were motionless. Try as I would, there was no

possibility of moving them. They lay inert, unable to obey any effort.

The days are long in July, and the rain kept beating round me as so often before. The afternoon was slowly drawing to an end. No one had come to see me that day except Allan. I felt unusually lonely. The doors at the three sides of my bed stood wide open. To the left the *Maidan*, grey during the hot season, lay green with all sorts of vegetation. Only the large rock had remained black, and on it was seated my friend the *Sadhu*, who had kept watch since I fell ill. Day and night he was there. In the early dawn I sometimes felt comforted to think that, like the living who watch their loved dead, this solitary figure was there to make me feel I was not quite alone. At first I had wondered what he was doing, dreading the long nights for him with the rain beating upon his body—bare but for the sheepskin and exposed to all the inclemency of the weather—and had sent the servants to inquire.

"Tell the Lady Sahib I shall remain here until I see her again moving about in the veranda; that I am watching over her, and waiting for that hour."

I wanted him to come and talk with me, but he had replied:

"I cannot come yet. I must wait until the Lady Sahib is well, and that is after all a very short time."

I strongly believe in the power of kind thought, and being under the influence of many conflicting principles, would have grasped at a straw for comfort. Was it possible that the "holy man" who knew—this I saw every day for myself—how to withstand the power of the elements, held hope in his hand, which in some mysterious way might strengthen soul and body? Wiser and stronger heads than mine may tell you differently.

Let me tell you, child, that the mind does not reason in those hours. It grasps blindly at any help which is suggested. I was dreaming awake of all kinds of possibilities, and impossibilities, when a voice startled me.

"*Salaam*, Lady Sahib, *bôt salaam*." Across the veranda I saw the *Sadhu* standing in the garden.

"I am pleased thou hast come at last, my friend. Thou didst take much time, and I have been wishing to talk to thee for many days. Why didst thou not come before?"

"It was no use my coming, *Hazur*, until I could bring some comforting news. Now that the Sahib is coming back, the Lady Sahib has reached half her desire. Soon more will follow. I could not come with empty hands. I had to bring good news."

"And who has told thee that the Sahib is coming back? And how dost thou know that I shall be well?"

"It is useless for me to tell; for the Lady Sahib cannot understand. She is longing for two gifts, one is a hollow stick though she thinks she can lean upon it. The other is greater, because it will help to accomplish a greater end."

"Tell me, *Sadhu*, who has told thee all this? How dost thou know?"

"Only those who look away from what their eyes behold understand, oh! *Hazur*! I am a poor man, and sit in the rain day and night. I have no clothes befitting and am not able to explain. The only thing I can do is to sit on the rock so that the Lady Sahib can see me, and her heart grow strong because others think of her. Soon I shall come back and sit down beside the Presence on the veranda. There will be great rejoicing, and the poor *Sadhu* will be glad because his thoughts have helped the Lady Sahib."

I was going to ask him many more questions, beg him to come in and sit down on the ground beside me—we had so often conversed together—but he was gone.

I lay wondering while the day became twilight, and the night followed. The lamps had not yet been brought in, and through the open window I could vaguely distinguish the form of my *Sadhu* whose presence even in the distance was comforting. I had done little for him, and he was doing so much for me. His gift, for having come unasked and unexpectedly, was doubly welcome. Now as I write, that atmosphere of love and hope seems to come back to me.

I felt strangely lifted. When the servants came with the lamp, I sent them all away.

“I do not want any dinner. Send me the *ayah*, and as soon as you have put things straight, close the house and leave me for the night.”

XLIX

It is difficult to tell you about the night which followed Allan's and the *Sadhu's* visits. How can I bring what I felt then into unison with what I believe at this hour? I seem to have been another being, yet I know that it was as distinctly I, as it is to-day. Thus in loyalty to that other me, I must try, as far as I can, to recollect what I thought then; and how the spiritual and material world for the moment became one.

At night, ever since I had been ill, there were forms floating around me. They sometimes came so close that

I tried to touch them, but they vanished or went farther from me. I had tried to interest the doctor in what I thought a phenomenon, but he said it was only fever. I knew that they were real, but I did not seem to mind. I believe the long nights quite alone would have been more dreary. My great sorrow had made me regardless of fear, and I had a subconscious feeling that the spectres were not my masters, but that I was holding them in my power, for I only needed to light my candle, and they all would vanish. They did me no harm either, but merely looked at me.

I do not remember if my phantoms came to keep me company that night, but Allan's return and the *Sadhu's* promise had greatly elated me. The weight of my limbs no longer troubled me. I have often known moments when the outer world disappeared, and my spirit, detached from material surroundings, followed its passionate yearning. Miracles had happened before. To wish to explain them was more than folly—it was useless too. I did not wish to understand, I wanted to be made whole.

I had seen wonderful things, why should not a miracle come to me? In the intensity of my desire I fought with God in that night as Jacob wrestled with the angel. I no longer doubted, no longer even hoped—I knew. It seems almost too sacred to tell, and in putting it down for you to-day, *l'esprit qui rit à côté du cœur qui pleure*, would prompt me to tell you it was all a dream—but it was not so, child.

The room grew light, and before me, so close that it seemed I might touch her, was my darling mother. In her arms she held you. And you were not the little daughter who had been taken away from me, but the baby girl I had borne in my arms. My mother was

just as in life I had loved her, young and beautiful, only that she resembled more than ever the Sistine Madonna. She pressed you close to her, as I so often had held you, and you both smiled at me. It was her own dear voice which said :

“You will be well on my great day.”

Then you and she grew suddenly as white as marble, and I was at Lourdes, looking at the statue of *la Mère des Douleurs*.

What followed I never could remember. I slept late next morning, and when I awoke I told my *ayah* that on the fifteenth of August I should be well.

When your father came on the following day, I told him about the apparition. It was very difficult to speak to him about things so intimate; doubly so because I had to mention you, which I had not yet done. He drew his chair closer to my bed.

“What you tell me is certainly very strange, but nothing about you ever surprises me, Eleonore. Of course you will get well. You are too young yet to have finished with life.”

“You cannot understand; nor can I; but I feel sure I shall be well on the day my mother said. When will you be coming, Allan?”

“Soon, very soon. I told you so. In any case, I shall be back before the fifteenth. May I send Dr. Linder to you? I should like to have his opinion.”

I was only too anxious to see our kind doctor and tell him everything. He always understood. What did it matter that he had given the certificate, now that Allan and I were friends again? The past was to be as if it had never existed, the children given back as if they had never been taken away. Was it my thoughtlessness which made me look thus lightly at things, or

was it not rather the joy of having Allan which made me forget all the rest? Nothing in life ever can undo what has been done. The sting, the stain may be taken away for a time, replaced by a new sensation, and the heart believes it has forgotten—but the pain will return. For the moment you three had gone into the background. I only lived for the hope of having him again, believing that with him there would be a return of all past joys.

“Try if you can stand,” Allan said when I told him that in little more than a fortnight I should be able to walk, but all my endeavours were futile. It did not even disappoint me. I had been given a day. It was useless to try and be well at once.

Dr. Linder called and was most sympathetic.

“There is no fear about you,” he told me. “On the day mentioned I shall make a point of calling first thing. In the meantime, keep your spirits up. Do not doubt and it will come all right.”

I told him how grieved I was that he had given the certificate which assisted your removal from Madame de Saint-Jean's. But he explained that he had been kept in complete ignorance of the situation, and had believed the attestation was to serve quite a different end.

“You know,” he said, “that for nothing in the world would I separate a child from its mother, much less you from your little daughter whom I know you worship. But that will be all right now that Mr. Montrose is returning. Set your mind at rest, and first of all try to get well. He is much concerned about you. Do not indulge in melancholy meditations. Be the brave woman I know you to be. Make up your mind to be well, and there is no doubt you will be.”

"Then you also believe I shall be cured? Come early on the fifteenth, doctor."

I felt stronger than I had been for many a day when Dr. Linder left me. It was good that I strengthened my soul by looking forward to the day which was to bring me recovery, for my hopes as to Allan's return were deferred. I expected him every day, and wondered what kept him away from me. He came more frequently now, almost daily, and would look at me, say a few words, sometimes inquire if people had called, and what they had said, but this was all. I sometimes thought that once again under the same roof things would be as they had been of yore. At other moments I felt despondent. Thus, between hope and despair, the days wore on. He did not once with a word refer to you, nor did I dare to do so. The sepulchre between us had only been whitened.

When Allan called, he never went to the drawing-room, never inquired why the garden was like a wilderness.

"Will you have tea?" I sometimes asked, but he always shook his head. He was simply a visitor, detached from everything which had been ours. Once when he was there the servant brought me a letter from Mr. Joscelyn. Your father knew him, as everyone did in India. I asked if it would give him pleasure to read the letter which was a "feast for the mind."

"It is a pity, Eleonore, you did not marry someone who had your tastes, and could have better entered into all your aspirations. Years generally change people. How is it that you have remained the same? Of late I have often wondered if I have not been wrong to tie your life to mine."

"What do you mean, Allan? I do not understand you. Are you not coming back for us to be happy together as in the days when we had everything in common? Have you forgotten how often you told me you were afraid I might change, but that you belonged to those sterling people who never vary? Now you are sorry I have remained the same Eleonore as when you first loved her."

My voice quivered with all the long-pent-up feelings. At last Allan would speak frankly, all misunderstandings be explained away. I had longed for this hour. I would tell him how much I had suffered for his sake, for our children's also, entreat him to let us all be what we were made to be—parents loving their own ones, who clung to their father and mother.

"Give me time, Eleonore," he said. "Things cannot be at once as they were. I have been to blame too, but in the meantime we had better not speak about these things. I have written to my people that you are ill, and that I have decided to come back to you. By and by I shall fall into the old groove, but do not be too exacting at first."

"Come just as you like. I shall make no conditions. It will be sufficient that the same roof covers us. You need not fear that I shall upbraid you, even refer to what has passed. Of one thing you may be sure, I shall do all in my power to make you happy. Since it is a sacrifice to come back to me—as I understand, not by the words you say, but by those you do not say—I shall know how to appreciate it, and leave you undisturbed. I will not trouble you much, but it is better for us, and for our children, that before the world at least, we should live as husband and wife."

"I am very pleased, Eleonore, that you have grown

so sensible. Do not be afraid. I shall be very kind to you, you will be in want of nothing, and I will give you, just as before, all the money you like. By the way, do you need some now? As I am coming back next Tuesday"—which was another week's waiting for me—"I would like you to give orders to prepare the bedroom at the other end"—the room you once had occupied, *ma toute chérie*—"I would prefer it to my old one."

Your father's room had been my study for months whilst I was working at my case. As soon as I knew he was coming back I had told the servants to get it ready for him. They had carried me over, so that I might see for myself that his smallest wants had been attended to. Always when he came he passed before the open door, but he had never entered it. I now understood why.

"I shall tell the servants to change the rooms. Will you send over your Boy to see that things are as you like them? I am sorry I am not able to supervise it myself," I said, when we parted that day.

After he had gone I felt sad. I was glad though that I had not shown it. As Allan said, "Things could not come right at once." Polly had worked too hard for that. I must wait and have patience. He had been much gentler that day. A desire to be kind to me seemed to pervade his words. Six months ago I had been in Scotland alone, in the grip of despair, now I was at home, had regained my place in society and in the consideration of everybody. There were the children—but this also would come right. Only six days more and he would come back to me.

Mr. Joscelyn's letter announced his visit for the next day. He was coming from Simla, where his duties

kept him in the hot season. Why was he leaving that delightful place at this time of the year, I wondered.

How indifferent Allan had grown! He had never been of a jealous disposition. "I trust you," he had said in the first years. Of late—this I remembered only too well, and a sharp pang shot through me—he had wished me to go out with other men, so that he might be free; but I had not been seriously interested in a single one. To-day the remembrance of some flashed past me, as I had seen them on the hunting-field, driving or riding out together. They had paid me many compliments and attentions, and we had laughed and talked together, sitting out at dances or seated at the supper-table, but I had not thought about one of them since.

When Mr. Joscelyn called, the servant who showed him in put a large box on the bed.

"I know you like violets," my visitor said, "so I brought you some."

"How kind of you! They are my favourite flowers. But how did you know?"

"Do you not remember the first ride we had at Simla together, round Elysium Hill? You jumped down from your horse as soon as you saw the violets in my garden. Nothing would satisfy you but you must have them. So before I left I gathered all there were, and added to them all that Simla could produce. Do you remember telling me, when I wanted you not to take the trouble to gather them yourself, that you only cared for things obtained with difficulty? I have often thought about it. You were right. Thus only things have value. I wish mine were the privilege of doing something difficult for you."

"You have done much for me. You sent me those

books. They have brought back my husband and happiness, and I owe it to you."

"I read in the papers that you had won your case, and felt proud to think those volumes may have contributed to your success. How hard you must have worked! I have come to tell you how sad I am that you are ill."

And so he had come all the way from Simla to tell me that, when a letter might have done as well. But it would have been unkind to tell him so.

"I shall soon be cured now," and then without any preamble I told him about my mother, and how she had come to me.

"Why does Mr. Montrose not take you by the next boat to Lourdes? That is the only thing to do."

I had expected him to smile as Allan had done, evidently wishing to humour me, but only listening to please me. Here there was subtle understanding, sympathy—the gift those who suffer value most. I had liked his letters. Even during the long days of illness they had been a stand-by. But how unsatisfactory compared to the spoken is the written word. I would never have believed that away from Allan I could delight in anything half as much as I enjoyed those hours with Mr. Joscelyn. This meeting from soul to soul was like standing on the top of a mountain where the air is champagne.

"I will send a gift to Lourdes when you are well. I am a Protestant like you, but I will do anything for them if only you are yourself again. I feel sure we shall meet at Simla. I will call on Mr. Montrose and tell him you must both come. My house is at your disposal. May I wire you on the fifteenth?"

He got up to leave, and when I had again thanked

him for the flowers, the many helpful things he had done, the courage he had inspired, all the kind thoughts he had sent me, he lingered as if he wished to say one thing more, but did not find the words. After a moment's silence he took my hand as in farewell.

"Do you know that in going I am happy that you are just what you are? I ought to feel sorry for you, lying there unable to move. Still I almost envy you. You are surrounded by great and lofty thoughts, the world and its strife do not touch you. You are yourself. There is only one I envy more. Yes, I do envy him, there is no doubt about it—him to whom belongs the privilege of taking care of you. God bless you! I feel sure in a little we shall meet again."

L

THE servants told me daily that the bazaar was very disquieted, and that people were expecting a riot between Mussulmans and Hindus, but I did not trouble. The feud between the two antagonistic races was very old, and would no doubt go on for ever. Dr. Linder called one morning, and said there were great gatherings in the native town. He had found difficulty in coming to me.

"They let my carriage pass at last. I heard them saying to the coachman: '*Doctor Sahib ka gharri hai. Challao.*' You had better ask Mr. Montrose to stay with you to-day. Some of those fellows looked as if they had imbibed any amount of *bhang*."

"I have not seen my husband for two days, but I am not afraid. We are so far from the bazaar."

"I think Mr. Montrose should be here. My way leads me past his office. I will call and tell him so."

"It is very kind, but I prefer you to leave things as they are. If he thinks his presence is necessary he will come up. He is the best judge, being in the midst of it. Do you not think so too?"

Dr. Linder understood that it was no use insisting. After all, if things grew worse, Allan would come up; and if he did not trouble, there was really no reason why I should do so. I did not believe things were as serious as they had been described.

The morning went by, but Allan did not come, as after all I had hoped. I should have been glad had he shown some anxiety, knowing that I was alone in the large bungalow. Nothing assuredly would happen, but what should I really do if some of those ruffians, who are always carried on the tide of every rising, should come here. The day had been bright and sunny; in the evening, which followed quickly after the short twilight, the moon rose beyond the *Maidan*, and I was able to distinguish the form of my friend the *Sadhu* keeping watch over me.

Dinner is late in India. However brief I had made mine, it was nine o'clock when I had finished. But instead of making his salaam and departing, the butler stood at the side of my bed as if he wished to speak.

"Well, what is the matter?" I asked.

"This place not safe, Madam Sahib, much *baberi* quite close. The coachman, he Mahratta and go away, because very much afraid of those Mussulmans. They very strong."

"I suppose you all wish to run away now. Tell those

who go they need not trouble about coming back; but those who remain I shall reward handsomely. Who do you think is going to stay with me?"

"I no find Hamal or Mussal. Donu came to look after Sahib's room. I fetch dinner from kitchen. *Chuprassi*, he lay *pugri* on the veranda steps and run, his coat beating the gate, and his cummerbund loose. The *ayah*, she very frightened; she stay, I also. Only Mussulmans and Hindus do fighting."

"That is all right, Antonio"—the butler and the *ayah* were Goanese and Catholics—"you and the *ayah* have your dinner. You need not fear. They will only touch you after they have killed me, and that is yet far off. Here is the key, open the safe and give me my revolver."

.

The night was drawing on, but the moon was not yet burnt out, and made light the expanse of ground on my left. The damp air was very mild, a slight haze covered everything, still something black was distinguishable—it was my *Sadhu* keeping watch. All was still and I felt tired. The moan of the sea seemed a lullaby and I longed to sleep.

Unexpectedly a strange noise sprang up. It was far off, indistinct. I looked at the *Maidan* but it was dull and sombre. The moonlight was gradually fading away. Whilst I was asking myself the reason of the distant noise it grew louder and more like the angry grumbling of the sea. Shadows appeared on the horizon, and on the *Maidan* I seemed to see those tough, bronze-faced men who can be so terrible in anger. Each time I looked there were more. The rioters had come—I hoped only to ransack the Hindu temples close to us. The voices began to be very loud and came dis-

tinctly to my bedroom. I no longer saw my *Sadhu*. Had he gone away or were the others hiding him from me? And what if they did not go to the temples but remained here, came perhaps to the bungalow, what should I do?

I took my revolver from under the pillow. Living, they would not get me.

The moon had hidden herself, but an afterglow of the great light remained. I still could distinguish the objects in my room—it is never quite dark in India. Old scenes of the Mutiny were haunting me. It was an unpoetical death to die. But does one choose the way to end life? I hoped the servants were safe.

At this moment the *ayah* and the two men literally fell into the room, squatted down on the farther side of my bed, howling and sobbing aloud.

“*Chuprao*. If you are not still they will hear you and come.” The doors stood wide open, but, my room being in the dark, no one could see us from the outside. My injunctions were vain. All three howled louder than before. “If you be not quiet I shall send you away, and if you do not obey me, and still continue screaming, I kill you first, then myself. Do you understand this?”

They at once stopped and I was glad, for I wished to help them all I could. Poor cowards! for whom life was so sweet that they thus bitterly deplored its possible end.

“Listen and it will be well with you! Donu and Antonio, carry me to the couch. Then close the doors, bolt them well, and pull the bed before the entrance looking out on the garden”—of which the *Maidan* was a continuation.

The men turned their faces towards me, and I saw

they were paralysed by fear. I was asking too much of them. They would never be able to carry me across the room. It was useless to tax their strength, appeal to their courage.

"At least close the doors," I said, but instead of doing what I told them the two men fell full length flat on the ground.

"*Maf karo, maf karo*, Madam Sahib," imploring me to forgive them for not carrying out my commands. "All the strength of my hands has gone," the Boy said, and the butler added sobbing: "And mine too."

I had only my two hands, but they were not going to abandon me. There were some weapons in my boudoir—not toys, but the real thing.

"One of you go and get my dagger, also the box of cartridges in the drawer of my writing-table." But the gentle whine of the two forms lying on the ground went on incessantly. "You two are useless. *Ayah*, will you go?"

The woman got up. Poor little timid thing of whom I was asking what neither of the men would do. She looked at the crucifix which hung over my bed in remembrance of one dear to me.

"I go if Madam Sahib will give me that to take in my hand."

And she took the emblem of her faith, went through my dressing-room and brought me the small box and the dagger, brightly polished and sharp—for I like things in good order.

All this had taken less time than I need to tell it to you. The sounds were growing nearer, and there was a roar of many angry voices. The clouds disappeared and in the rays of the moon I distinguished excited faces looking over the wall. To judge from their *pugris* the

Hindus were in the majority. One voice louder than the others shouted:

"Let us go and see what the Madam Sahib is doing all by herself."

I touched my revolver—the six chambers were loaded. With the other hand I held the dagger, and my heart was cold. Allan had abandoned me, my children betrayed me. I did not think of you in that hour—my heart had gone back to my first-born and his brother. Still I loved life and hated death, though its embrace might be less painful than I fancied. In any case I was ready. It flashed across me suddenly that Mr. Joscelyn should have stood at my side in this hour. It could have been a good thing to discuss life—then to master it—and to finish with it.

"Do not be afraid," I said to my three protégés. "I am here watching over you. No one will harm you if you have confidence in me."

"*Such bat*, Lady Sahib."

Any moment now they might come. Life had been a very good thing, and to end it by my own choice was perhaps the best thing of all—I always had loved to soar above difficulties, not to be vanquished by them.

I was prepared for anything, death or life, when I heard my *Sadhu's* voice:

"What are you doing here, Sweepings of the Ground? Who gives you permission to look over the wall?"

"We want to go in, but the gates are locked."

"You will not go in and bother my *Hazur*. What has she done to you? She has not spat at you when you passed, bare as I am, and called you dogs. When your wives and children were sick she knelt down to wash and feed them."

"She is a *mem-sahib* and drives in a carriage for which we pay with our money. Our pots are empty when the monsoon is scant, but she drinks wine, and when our goat has run dry we have not even milk," confused voices replied.

"When the *chota-sahib* was born and the child of the priest in the temple under the peepul-tree was withering because his mother was dead, the Lady Sahib fed him from her breast, because she was sorry when the servants told her that the *baccha* was dying, and that the world would be poorer for a man-child. Children of Owls. If you touch the Lady Sahib, your hands will wither like leaves and you will tremble in every limb. Your daughters will bring forth womenkind, and your sons die of cholera and famine. One does not take away the calf from its mother, nor is one limb torn away from the other, without great pain, and for many a day my eyes have loved to see the Lady Sahib. She expects a great joy, and though it will not be the bright day but only the dark night"—I shuddered when I heard this, "she longs for that hour and asks for her limbs to be set free. I have promised her both. Now if you want to cut off the hand from which water flows for you and your people, say one word, then kill the holy man who will for ever torment your souls in hell."

He stood on the wall. Had I been well, a few steps would have taken me to him! I tried to move, but my limbs were tied to the bed. The servants crouching close to me had taken hold of my sheets and were kissing them.

There was a rattling at the back door, close to the kitchen.

"Has not one of you the courage to go and tell them they had better not come here, that alive they will not

touch me—and that my revolver is six times loaded!”

But none of them moved.

“We only want to look at her,” one voice said. “We shall not harm her.”

Another shouted: “Some say she is a man, and knows more than the Magistrate Sahib. We want to talk to her.”

How I would have loved to be among them! But I was tied as with ropes.

“She knows many things,” the *Sadhu* went on; “but what she knows best is to suffer. This only women understand. Men are too busy, their minds also are too clumsily built. Perhaps she was proud to gather the bitter flowers, not knowing how they would hurt her hands. She understands the long nights and the barren days, and she loves our people, and does not come from the land where the *Sahib-lôg* dwell who write long reports, though they know nothing about us.”

Then the *Sadhu* drew himself up and seemed to grow before my eyes. The slight figure holding his arms outstretched poured over them a storm of abuse, calling upon his gods and the elements to help him. I still seem to hear him: “May the Fire of Heaven destroy you! May your children be maimed and blind! May the mountains open their mouths to devour you. . . .”

There was an eddy as of the sea receding. The *Sadhu* stood alone, and my servants around me were weeping and sobbing for joy.

LI

"And I would dedicate these thankful tears
To whatsoever power beneficent,
Veil'd though His countenance, undivulg'd His thought
Hath led me from the haunted darkness forth
Into the gracious air and vernal morn! . . ."

ALLAN came home on the following day.

"Now you have me again," he said; "be happy."

I could only look at him and take his two hands into mine. I do not know if he even faintly understood the thoughts which passed through me, for only love can divine what fills a woman's heart—only in loving, man can understand her.

Since the night before, I had begun to see that duty had brought Allan back to me. Was it even that, I wondered, or rather public opinion which had grown too strong for him?

When I spoke about the rioters he smiled quite unconcernedly. "They would never have come as far as here." And when I said they had stood just opposite to where he now sat, he gave the thing but little importance—but then your father never understood what others suffered. He had shared joy and grief with me in the past only because I had been part of himself, but with the end of sweet intercourse this sympathy no longer existed.

I did not mention what I had planned to do, had the horde come near me. "You exaggerate danger," he would have said. Or: "Your mind always turns to

desperate means." When I said how frightened the servants had been: "Don't speak to me about them, they are cowards. I know them." For the rest, not a word of tenderness or regret—nothing. And when, desirous of knowing how he could reconcile it with himself that he stayed away, I asked:

"Do you not think, Allan, it might have been better if you had come last night?" he replied:

"Now that you have me, be satisfied. What is the use of looking back?"

He dined at home, and came to say good night—cold and formal, like a stranger. After all, what else were we? His lips had forgotten that once they were mine.

The next morning before leaving he came to my room.

"You must dine with me to-night. I have given orders to the servants to carry you into the dining-room. I do not like to see you ill. You must try and take up life as if you were well."

"I will do anything that gives you pleasure. I am almost sorry to leave my bed. But that is a morbid fancy. I shall be all right to-night. I have no doubt it will do me good."

Your father came home late, only just in time to dress for dinner. I heard the servants saying that I was waiting for him in the dining-room, but he passed before the open door on his way to his bedroom without once looking at me.

It seemed like a dream to be again seated together, I lying on my cane chair across the head of the table, he at my side. This had always been his seat, he had never liked the distance of the table to separate us. Here on the first night after Montfort's birth he had taken one solitary dinner—the next, and all of those which followed, he took beside my bed. A tortoise-shell

cat, as he then told me, came and sat beside him. "But for that little beast I would have been distracted. I almost would have given up our son to have you with me." Oh! the happy hours we had spent here together, lingering under the punkah for dessert. All the tender, tender things he had told me, speaking of that love which was never to cease.

Many had gathered round the table and there had been much talk and laughter. On my left, in his old place which for so long had been empty, he sat once again, the master of the house; but where was my own love?

We spoke of many things. I have sometimes been told that I am a good conversationalist. It was necessary indeed to apply all the resources of my mind. On my right you had sometimes sat with me for luncheon; behind your place, on the wall—Allan could not raise his eyes without seeing it—there was the painting I had brought from Germany. Was it possible? Were they our children, and he their father, that man who never once had spoken to me about them, for whom I had to rack my brains for subjects which in no way should allude to you three, or touch upon the past?

When we had finished dinner he said: "You will excuse me. I shall leave you now and smoke a cigar on the veranda. I have taken again to smoking."

How those words took me back to the "what once had been"! Though I must have smoked cigarettes when I was a baby in arms—or shortly afterwards—cigar-smoke has always given me a headache. As to the pipe, *n'en parlons pas!* When Allan asked me the first time for a kiss I said to him: "I have made a vow, I shall never give a kiss to a man who smokes cigars." "I also have made a vow," he replied, "I shall never smoke a cigar again." How small and of little importance all

this may seem to you—but for those who love even a gesture carries weight.

Later on Allan came to say good night. "You are quite your bright self again, Eleonore. Do you think you will always remain thus?"

"Surely I shall, only seem more happy even. Tomorrow is the great day, and in a few hours I shall be well."

"I only hope it may be true," he said, and on the threshold of the door: "I shall be glad too."

Then he left me.

I remember being very anxious that night for the *ayah* to leave me soon. A great task was before me. Only two nights ago I had looked death in the face, and now I was waiting for life. All the evening my heart had been sorely oppressed—it was to remain so—yet a great joy filled it, taking the sting from the pain. Hope like a great light burnt in my heart, and "went before me" like the star the wise men saw, "and rejoiced with exceeding joy."

I had often steeled my soul against failure, but here there was no longer any doubt. I called back to my mind all the great, all the wonderful things which have happened, which take place daily—if we only knew them. Answer to prayer, fulfillment by one human being of another's most secret desire, coincidence, chance, fate—what does the name matter, as long as trust bears fruit?

A proud array of women and men passed before me. They had fought and suffered, but they had vanquished. Their faith in themselves had been great; they were strong enough to appeal to that spark of the divine element which is in all of us, which is materialised when, in a flash of time, soul conquers matter.

I set my being aflame with longing, my cry of anguish

went to the Great Unknown Spirit. He knew I did not fear death, since death is the end of all things. Nor did my spirit shrink from ceasing the task, to lay myself on Nature's breast and for ever go to sleep. But alive to be dead? This could not be. A future life did not trouble me. Like Faust, I wanted life now; I wanted to attach myself to life, be its slave, if it must be—since no one is free—but be a living, moving power in the world, love if I could, suffer if I must, but once again take the cup in my hands, set my lips to it, and drink it to the full.

Hearts of those who have suffered and vanquished! How you bent down to me in that hour. You knew well how to inspire force and endurance. But nearer and closer than I held you to me, was my proud, ambitious, unbending will, my innermost self, ready always to come to the rallying point.

I had fought and I had conquered. If doubts there had been, they had vanished. A great happiness flooded my being, and I went to sleep.

When I woke up at dawn my first thought was to try and move, but my limbs were still irresponsive to my will. Every hope is buoyant when the goal is in sight. Mine had to remain valiant, even though clouds hid for a moment the mark set to bound my race.

My *ayah* brought me a telegram.

"Keep your heart strong. To-day will give you back to the world."

How kind of Mr. Joscelyn to remember the date!

And what would Allan say when he knew that I was not all right? A fear crept over me. Not that he would be grieved, no, but perhaps get annoyed, grow weary of me. I never yet had felt like this, not even in my hours of greatest estrangement, but it was as if hostile influ-

ences, coming from him, were around me, and as if his will kept me here on the bed a prisoner.

A long grey road opened itself out before me, as far as I could see. Allan had passed me. I saw him walking in the distance, accompanied by a figure which I could not distinguish, though it seemed known to me. It had not the gait of a woman. I was lying on the roadside gagged, bound hand and foot, and I knew it was for always. The two shadows were going farther and farther away from me, I could scarcely distinguish them at the horizon. I was dying inch by inch, with a fierce longing that Allan should turn back to me. As far as my voice could carry, I was crying to him. My whole being was undergoing a thousand agonies. Wrenched in every fibre, I was thrown into space, and the night was black and intense. Then I seemed to hear his voice. Allan had heard my cry of despair; he had come to me. There was a loosening of cords.

When I opened my eyes everything around me was just as it always had been. Dr. Linder's kind, sympathetic face was bent over me. I heard him say:

"She is coming round all right. Now leave us two alone until I call you," and I saw Allan leaving the room. It was broad daylight. My breakfast stood on the table beside me.

"What has happened? It must be late. I was awake at five."

"You are well now. Get up."

Then, supporting me with his strong arm, Dr. Linder made me sit up in bed, and said: "Walk now. You are all right."

I put one foot to the ground, then the other, and made a step. I stretched out my two arms and sobbed aloud with joy, for I could walk. If I lived a thousand years,

I shall never forget it. I have heard some say that they beheld the heavens open; to me life showed itself in all its splendour, full of exquisite delight and all the untold possibilities of the future. I was free again, a moving being among the living. Dr. Linder seemed as happy as I was. I had such an overpowering desire to share my joy with someone, that I would have liked to put my arms round his neck. I laughed, I cried, I sobbed, I wept. Tears were streaming down my cheeks. Convulsed with my great happiness, I knelt down; for my spirit longed to offer its tribute there and at once to whomsoever it might be, to that Unseen Power Who from darkness had led me into light.

When I grew calmer the doctor told me how glad he was.

"It was one of those nervous cases difficult to explain," he said. "When I was a young practitioner a similar thing happened to the daughter of an English clergyman. There was some great love trouble and her parents treated her very harshly. She was stricken down as you were. Day after day I went to see her, encouraging her in every possible manner. At last I got her to walk."

"You should have done that with me, doctor."

"There was not much persuasion needed with you. You have a will. As to your husband, I think he is doing all he is able to do. You must not expect too much from him. Years and difference of race have become far greater barriers than even I dreaded. Let things go. Take him as he is. He is very anxious about you, and after all that has happened, it is well to be satisfied that things are as good as they are. It is not an easy thing for a woman to be alone. Those who would wish most to help you can do nothing for you."

"Do you really think he cares that I am well?"

"Surely he does. You should have seen him this morning when I arrived. The servants were greatly upset, and he was on the point of coming himself to fetch me; he thought you were dead. I at once saw that you had only fainted. It took me some time to get you round, and he did not leave my side. But why look back? You will be quite yourself soon. Of course you will not be able to walk at once as if nothing had happened, but every day you will improve. Now let me go and call your husband."

After helping me back to bed the doctor fetched Allan. I do not know what he told him, but your father was gentle and kind, and bent over me, stroking my cheeks.

"Are you really glad, Allan?"

Then drawing his head down to me, I pressed my lips on his—it was our first kiss after so long. There was no response. They were cold, and felt as if they belonged to someone else. A shadow came across his face, as if he disliked what I had done. Thus he had looked at me when, in the dream, he had passed me on the long road, to disappear from me for ever. We were alone.

"Allan, what is the matter? Do tell me. Who has come between you and me? I see you no longer care for me. Does a woman stand between us? Surely I should know."

He pulled himself together. "There you are. It is just like you to fancy impossibilities. We have been separated such a long time. I am no longer accustomed to your caresses." Then, as he read in my face that I did not believe him: "You are over-sensitive, Eleonore, because you are ill. When I came in this morning you had fainted and I thought you were dead. If you

only could keep calm, you would soon be well and strong, as I would like to see you."

"I do not care if I am well or not, since you no longer love me. It is you I want, you only. I shall never rest until I have conquered you again."

"You must not expect things all at once. Did I not tell you so before? You are always impatient. You will only make yourself ill. Try and get well. You are on the best road, if only you give yourself rest."

"Allan, are you really happy that I am well again? The doctor says that I shall soon be able to take up ordinary life, go about with you as I did before. Tell me you are glad. Would you be sorry if I had died? I know I am foolish, but give me something tangible to cling to—to tell me you would have missed me."

"Set your mind at rest. Even when I felt most bitter against you, I decided that if you died, I would have you buried in my mother's grave in Scotland, where I shall lie some day. This will prove to you that I never thought of another woman."

He helped me to sit up in bed, and put his arm around me, but I felt it was all so different from what it had been. Had he taken me in his arms, close to him, told me how much he loved me, how he was jealous of the very air which surrounded me, as he had said so often in the days of old, I would have trusted him, been convinced even against myself, believed that I had found again my lover.

"What comfort is it to know what you would have done had I died in that sad land of exile? There is no strength in the thought of lying beside you when I am dead. I am living. With every pulse of my being I am asking for you living. I say with Faust: 'What is the Beyond to me if you first destroy this world?' "

Your father drew away his arm, and I was resting on the bed. I understood that it would have been better had I not spoken.

"Are you angry, Allan?" I asked.

"All that has happened has evidently been of no use to you as a lesson. You are as exacting as ever, absolutely the same as when I left you. Now let me say that you will have everything just as you had before, handle the money as you have been in the habit of doing; but I must have my tranquillity, and remain undisturbed. I do not wish to leave you again, but do not make things too difficult for me."

Seeing my look of despair and how my face quivered, he added: "I have no doubt things will be all right again. You must be more patient, not want things all at once."

.

This was the day of my resurrection to the world!

LII

How quickly things are forgotten! We turn heaven and earth to obtain our desire—a little time passes, and no one even remembers it.

Your father's return had been a nine days' wonder, but it was soon forgotten, and for all but me was as if it had never been. I took up life again, for it was the only thing to do. I grew well gradually. At the beginning I still had to be carried to the dining-room, and though it was in some respects an ordeal, for my

limbs felt sore with pains of languor due to want of exercise, yet I always wore a bright face. As the days went on, things between Allan and me grew less acute. He saw that I did everything not to disturb the harmony, and he did his part—which was more easy than mine.

I do not believe in compensations; but I noticed that Allan was anxious to make me forget, and did things to please me, as one pleases a child. All that money can procure was mine, as in the past. I had suffered so terribly from its want that I often thought I should be glad now—but I was not. The safe was again full of rupees, but what I wanted was the absolute possession of his heart, and mine was empty. Gradually I grew stronger and was able to move about in the rooms. I often called back the hours when I was there alone, saw myself as I had been then—for this remembrance was also useful. At least I was once again beside him. And then—some hearts are made like that, and, as I told you before, mine had to die a slow death—I still did not doubt but that I should win him back.

There were incidents though which should have taught me differently, but in the things I passionately longed for I never accepted a lesson from life.

One morning, it was shortly after I had recovered—for this was the term I applied to what in my heart I called a miracle—your father came to say good-bye to me in my room, for the doctor's orders were that I was only to rise in the afternoon. The servants had carried me back the night before and the *ayah* had undressed me in my bedroom, for every step was still an effort.

"I did not come in to say good night," he said, "for I saw through the venetians that the *ayah* had not left. You seemed to be moving about as if in perfect health."

Something strange in his tone startled me.

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"Oh, nothing! I just wondered for a moment if you have really been as ill as you told me."

I was perhaps more hurt than indignant; and when he left he seemed moved that he had been so unjust.

After he had gone the letters from Scotland were brought to me. I have never understood how it happened, it was certainly against Allan's orders. I had not heard a word of your brothers for eight months, and of you for three. I opened Polly's letter. Nothing of you except that you were well—but she filled sheet after sheet with supplications that your father should not return to me.

"Do not think, dear brother, that she is really ill. As I told you in my last, her state is only simulated to appeal to your generous nature. I hope you will be able to withstand her wiles. She has spread out a net, but you with your high principles will not fall into it."

There was another letter from a certain Mercy, the sister of your grandfather. She most unmercifully had added her voice to the chorus. I suppose it is a common thing to hate those we have deeply wronged. I understood that Allan's suspicion had been roused by all those vile tongues. The letters were put into his room, where he found them in the evening. I did not tell him I had read them. He saw this from the open envelopes. Neither of us referred to it—nor did I ever speak again of my illness, which had been a kind of bond between us.

As the days wore on, my mind slowly grew more reconciled. For the surroundings of life your father was kind and considerate, and there was no friction. The doctor had told him that after the great shock to my nervous system, it was most necessary that my mind should be kept at rest. Still I did not get strong.

A lukewarm atmosphere has never agreed with me. I was made to expand under the scorching heat of adversity or the ardent sun of happiness. A middle path is antagonistic to my nature. Those whom Heine aptly describes:

"Wir essen gut, wir trinken gut,
Erfreu'n uns unser's Maulwurfglücks"

are my natural enemies. It may seem strange to you, child, yet it is so, I prefer to suffer than to stagnate.

In those days which followed your father's return, I did not woo misfortune, for my whole being was expectant of joy. I had to get well, for your father disliked illness. I have known some sacrifice themselves to the sick day and night, yet loathing disease because it is imperfection; but people who suffered wearied and worried your father. I had seen him almost distracted when Montfort, as a baby, was taken ill for the first time. It was a mere nothing, but it absolutely annoyed him. This did not trouble me then; ignorant of the world as I was, I believed that all men hate suffering. Life has taught me that they can understand and be tender.

During my convalescence he would ask me to do almost impossible things. I sometimes tried, but generally failed, and though he did not speak, I knew he was weary, and my over-anxiety to be well prevented me from recovering completely. Once again he spoke, not of sending me to Europe, but of my going there; yet never once had he mentioned the children.

It was that, I believed, which was wearing me out, the longing for you. Still I could not leave him. I must first regain his love. I wished he would come, and together we would go to our children. I had asked

timidly once or twice: "Allan, will you accompany me to Europe?" but he had said with something of the old fire: "I shall leave my bones here in India, I shall never go home."

One day I sent for my old friend Dr. Linder.

"I do not get better, doctor. Help me. Something must be done. I will not go to Europe without my husband, and he says he will never go back."

"I can well understand his not wishing to see his people, after the lies he told them. Don't leave him either. I shall tell him he must take you for a change."

We spent a month together in Dula; and Time, which so jealously held my happiness in his hand, at last consented to give me some beautiful hours before the dark set in for ever. It was the end of the monsoon and the weather was glorious, the place ideal, and all arrangements round us perfect. We had a bungalow far away from the beaten track, and once again we were alone together. Even now, whilst I write to you, I stop and ask myself how it was possible that I dreamt of finding again my friend, my lover, except that my heart was easily pleased where he was concerned, and full of hope. Going up in the train, he sat beside me, not opposite cold and formal, and put his arm round me, as never yet since his return.

"It will all come right," he said; and once again I believed him.

In those first days of our *vie à deux*, it was no longer hope which filled my being, but the intimate conviction that all was coming back to me. Sometimes Allan would look at me, just as he so often had done in our happy days, and say:

"You are growing more beautiful every day, and your eyes are no longer green, they are black."

264 A MOTHER IN EXILE

Madame de Saint-Jean had been the first to tell me so, when I came to her after I met your father.

"Never mind the colour of my eyes. They are green, nothing will ever change them, but they are black if you prefer it. You know I was never beautiful, but I do not mind since you love me again."

Still we had not spoken about you. I cannot even say, as I should, that I suffered. No, my heart, as it is made, can only hold one desire, and this was again for your father. I was calling for him with all the power of my being, though not in words. What is the use of words between man and woman who, in each other's arms, have drunk deep from the cup love poured out?

One evening, it was past midnight—but your father liked to sit up late—and all the servants had gone to rest. We were sitting downstairs still smoking together, he and I.

"It is just like old times, Eleonore. Read me something," he said.

There is a red book of mine—a commonplace book, as it is called, but not commonplace for me, for it contains detached thoughts, poems, all the beautiful things I have copied during a lifetime. And when I have time—I speak of the present—or have to do something I dislike, I open it and read to myself aloud, and never fail to put myself into the right mood. The book was at hand.

"I copied this poem from Rider Haggard's 'The World's Desire.' I wonder if you would like it?" I said. "It is rather sad, but it seems to fit us two. Perhaps he who wrote it suffered as we have."

"You always like sad things; but I do not mind for once. Let me hear what it is. I will tell you afterwards if it suits me."

"O joy of love's renewing
Could love be born again;
Relenting for thy rueing,
And pitying my pain.

O joy of love's awaking,
Could love arise from sleep,
Forgiving our forsaking
The fields we would not reap!

Fleet, fleet we fly pursuing
The love that fled amain;
But will he list our wooing,
Or call we but in vain?

Ah! vain is all our wooing,
And all our prayers are vain;
Love listeth not our suing,
Love will not wake again."¹

"Let us go upstairs," he said. "There I will give you my reply."

When we entered my room, he put his arm round me, and drew me to the couch. In this hour of intense expectancy, I knew that if death claimed me afterwards, I would not mind.

"Thank God, Allan. You are mine again."

He gently unloosened my arms, which were round his neck, and stroked my cheeks, as one does to a child who suffers.

"We have been separated so long," he said. "Do you remember telling me in Venice that 'you could not be married to me without trumpets and flags flying?' When I come to you, it will be as to a Queen. You must

¹ By Andrew Lang. Reprinted by permission of Longmans, Green and Co., from "The World's Desire," by H. Rider Haggard and Andrew Lang.

lie buried in roses to receive me. That will be our real reunion."

"Stay to-night, Allan! What is all the rest compared to you and me? I want neither flowers nor perfumes. I want you."

.
He did not come, either that night or any other night.

LIII

I BURIED the hope raised with the promises which never saw fulfilment, and the joy of the first days in Dula lost its keenness. Allan seemed to grow weary of inaction; and I longed to be home to forget in work and preoccupation for others the thoughts which were harassing me.

There in Dula I understood that the best part of life, the sweetest of love's intercourse had gone, never to return. Never again would Allan make me forget the weight of the hours; and all that away from him, and through him, I had suffered. I do not think that pride and amour-propre smarted. It was my heart which could not be reconciled that, loving him as I did love him, I was set aside—cast away as a thing useless and done with.

Will you understand me, my child, as I wish you to understand me? The creed in which they have brought you up speaks of renunciation as the goal of life; my creed, and that of every thinking mind, demands fulfilment. I also have the power of detachment; there is no sacrifice I cannot bring "on special service." But the

first duty of every human being is to get from life as much happiness as he can, so long as in so doing he does not injure another.

We are not merely spirits, but men and women, made of flesh and blood. This is our glorious prerogative; for there is nothing greater or more sacred than the gift of ourselves in love, from woman to man and man to woman. She, the barren woman who despoiled me of my treasures, narrow, cruel-minded, capable of any baseness for money's sake, at least cannot take away the fact that I conceived you three in hours of ecstasy, that he and I were one.

Nor will she—since man disdained her—be able to tell you, as I do tell you, that your womanhood is your most glorious possession, which dares to have no other buyer than Love himself; a treasure which you must give or bury for ever, like the merchant who, despising all the gold of the Rialto, and laughing at kings, threw his pearl into the sea, rather than sell it for less than it was worth. To you, who are my daughter, I say: Be proud of your body, keep it beautiful and pure, look upon it as dedicated to the inviolable service of love. Remember these words which your mother would have told you, holding you on her knees.

Never be ashamed of the gift of love. All the unhealthy, selfish or stupid passions—gambling, avarice, greediness, tyranny—we discuss without hatred and without anger; but we are ashamed to speak of love, the only passion which looks for its happiness in that of another; love which bestows power and honour upon us, makes us rich and poor, proud and humble at the same time, because we are afraid we shall never be devoted, disinterested enough to deserve that he loves us as we love him.

Thus I had loved your father in the glorious days of my youth, when life seemed too short for all my hopes and dreams. Thus I still loved him after so many years and all I had suffered from his hands. He was mine, as I was his, because I loved him as I never had loved any other human being, because I had put into his keeping the gift of myself, and all the treasures it held; given to him in the bridal night all that was dearest and most sacred to me—myself. This nothing could undo. By this right he was mine.

The Puritan may frown and speak of woman's "sacrifice to the man she loves" and of her body as a thing to hide; the intellectual may disdain "matter"; but I was proud of the gift bestowed joyfully, as I had in turn received. In the hour of ecstasy he and I had soared towards the Infinite, but the wings of Desire, before carrying us there, had beaten against the iron soil of Reality, and you three were our children.

I did not admit of a life together without the privilege love bestows. There are duties between married people, but there are also rights. The physiological function which so many disdain through temperament, ignorance, or prejudice, has always seemed noble and beautiful to me, because it is one of the great, blind powers of Nature, like the eternal coming and going of the tide, like dawn always born again. Its glorious consequences—the virgin grown a woman, the mystery of her becoming a mother, the first cry of the child, his clinging to her breast, all the beauty and sacredness of womanhood, from which some turn with criminal contempt—were royal gifts to me.

All these questions have been of burning interest, in my life. They are so to-day, though some I have probed too deeply. I had been alone before, but when desire

gripped me at the throat, it had only been for him who was the beginning and the end of desire itself.

Though I had begun to understand that never again would we love as in the past, I still longed for him with all the intensity of my heart's passionate desire. If I cannot win him back, I said to myself, at least I must strive until life leaves me. Some women might have become resigned, but my nature is not moulded thus. Others might have been goaded on to new loves or adventures. It was no merit for me to remain chaste. No man had the power to tempt me.

For beings unfit for marriage, for the degenerate and invalids suffering from solitude, Comte dreams of marriage without the bonds of the flesh. His conception of the possibility of such unions is fine and generous; but Humanity is different from this ideal. The *mariages républicains*, when Carrier had maid and man tied naked together and thrown into the Loire, seem less revolting to me.

He and I had been such lovers once! I could not live beside him and be merely his friend. My nature was too ardent. To be satisfied with this, as he would have wished me to be, may seem great to some women who could put it into practice; but my body and the whole temper of my mind made it impossible. Had he been infirm, worn out, maimed, I might have accepted this rôle. But to live with the remembrance of the past still pulsating in me, with the phantom of our happiness haunting me at night, was more than I could bear.

As long as life lasted would it be thus? I began to ask myself. To live mere friends, as your father evidently understood reunion, is not considered "reconciliation" by Scotch law. I still was free to ask for my divorce after eighteen months or so had elapsed. I was again

thrown on the reef of conflicting thoughts; one moment asking myself if I would have the fortitude to endure this kind of life; at another if I would ever have the courage to leave him. I knew what solitude means for a woman, and I dreaded to be alone. The strained relations which again existed between us—the night is darkest when we believe the dawn is close—filled my heart at times with great bitterness; yet I always tried to vanquish resentment, and I believe that by straining every nerve, I succeeded not too badly.

Perhaps I could have borne life as it was, had it not been for you and your brothers. My poor heart was groping in darkness. Since he no longer needed me, you must need me. With the thought, the longing for you awoke, and the mother's heart cried out. Nothing had changed, things were just as they had been before, but one morning I woke up with the most terrible heart-ache for my children.

Had we not been in Dula I should have found time for reflection; but here Allan was the whole day with me, and I felt one word might destroy the barrier I had so carefully built up. One Sunday morning at Weimar in the Zoo we four had seen a lioness from whom her young ones had been taken. She was rushing about in the cage as if demented. "Thus I should be," I told you, "if you were taken away from me." Did my mind foresee what I should feel one day?

I went into the garden to be alone, but your father followed me.

"A parcel has arrived from Scotland with presents from the children for you. Will you come?"

I went in. There lay the two little gifts. A green plush bag with my initials worked in red silk. Was it possible that my little daughter's fingers had grown so

deft? Alas! her mother had not taught her, but that other woman.

"I never could have believed that Reine's small hands worked this bag. Does it not seem strange, Allan, our dainty little fairy plying the needle, and doing such difficult work?" Your father had not seen you for almost two years, though he passed close to you on his way to India; but I have no doubt he was afraid of Madame de Saint-Jean.

"I am sure Polly helped her," he said. To think that her fingers had touched the gift, for a moment took away all its value.

Beside the bag lay a small brass paper-knife with a blue-and-white china handle. Now, whilst writing to you, I take it up, and hold it in my left hand.

"From whom does this come?" I asked, touching the thin brass blade, wondering who of my two sons had remembered me.

"Laurent sends it to you. And he says: 'Tell my mother that I love her.'"

Montfort evidently had not thought about me.

"Show me the boys' letters. I also want to see Polly's. I must at last know about our children, and how they are."

"You do not need to trouble about them. They are all right. I shall show you their notes some other day, not just now. Don't worry me."

"I want the letters now, Allan, now, not at some other time." It was the first time I had asked. "I must have them at once. Long enough I have allowed things to slide, not even spoken about my darlings." It seemed that my heart must break with misery. "Let me see what they tell you. Show me also what the wicked woman says, who keeps what is mine."

He looked at me startled. "Is this the attitude you take? And what right have you to those letters?"

"Every right, Allan, and you know it. Are they not my two sons? At least they were until that woman corrupted and made cowards and traitors of them. They were my little lovers when you left me, and the touch of their cheeks against mine was velvet. They loved me—at least I believed they did. And all the time the work of darkness was going on. She debased them with God on her lips and the Devil in her heart, made them act a lie. And they betrayed me, who would have given my life for them! That is nothing. I would have shed my blood drop by drop to shelter them from any harm. What have I done to that woman that she thus planned and schemed and corrupted my own? I felt sorry happiness passed her by when she was young, and that a man jilted her. I am glad now that she never was asked to share his bed. She would have brought forth monsters, and the world has no need of such!"

He looked at me, and folded his arms. "Have you gone mad?" he asked.

"Yes, I have gone mad. And you are surprised at it? But first I must tell you what strangles me. You thought I had forgotten—or accepted. No, I have not. It is true I forgot Montfort and Laurent for a time—and you know why—but I never accepted. I am not one of those women who accept. I have never been resigned, I never shall be. I hate that woman, your sister, and I want you to know it! I once believed that my character was too noble to repay evil by evil; but I was mistaken. I am mad, as you say, and I now ask that every ill and woe may befall her, that at the hour of her death—there is no fear of her dying though, she will far outlive you—all the pent-up agony of my soul, all the

tears of my body I have wept for my boys, may echo in her soul—if such she has—and torment her day and night in the Beyond.”

“Will you come to your senses?” he said. “All this time I have been living in a fool’s paradise. I thought you were happy with me, and now I discover that you are harbouring such bad feelings against my people. I really must ask you to stop.”

“No, you cannot stop me. My heart has been crying day and night. You must hear me at last. Do you know—does a man ever know what a woman suffers when she brings forth a child? I did not want children—you know this as well as I do—for you did not care for them. Then they came, and I loved them, and forgot the dark hour. They were my sweet darlings, cuddling at my breast, looking up at me with love in their eyes. I was proud of them, of myself too that I had borne them.” He wished to interrupt me. “No, let me speak. Do you know what I feel now? I am ashamed of the cowards I put into the world. From their babyhood I instilled into their hearts all that was noble and good, unselfish too. I was careful to curb every mean thing in me, so that I might set them an example. You were first in my life—that you know—but I loved my darling children as few mothers do. And they loved me! Oh! how they loved me! And then . . .”

“Stop, Eleonore, I tell you,” he exclaimed.

But I continued: “No, you must let me finish. I took them to your people. You did not ask me to do so. I did it because I wanted them to be happy, as happy as they could be away from me. It is no use speaking of the past—you know best why you left me. You know also that you had no right to lay that in-

iquitous condition upon me—not to go and see them. You yourself would have despised me had I consented, and rightly so. After you deserted me, I went a stranger, a woman under a cloud, to Scotland. In that inhospitable place I had still my Montfort and Laurent left to love me. Your tools—I cannot believe you were theirs—took them from me, the children from ‘the mother of whom any child might well be proud’! These are your very words, Allan.”

“Eleonore, I cannot allow you to continue. You have the children still.”

“No, I have them no longer. Montfort and Laurent are dead long ago, and those boys who are left are not worth even my tears. But I forget at times, Allan, yes, I do forget, and my heart cries out for them. Oh! my Montfort, oh! my Laurent, my own ones, my sons! Why did you betray your mother who loves you?”

“Cease, Eleonore.”

“And what has Polly told my sons? I know it all just as if I had listened to it. She has spoken to them of disgraceful things I have done, told them that their mother is a drunkard—the thing I most loathe. A drunkard! It is too horrible for words! They are your flesh and blood too, Allan. Had you no pity with your own? Was there no other weapon in your hand to strike me, instead of dragging me so low in the mire, and putting that infamous stigma on my children? Tell me what made you do that. Tell me.”

He remained silent.

“There was one being left to love, my own little Reine—my Benjamin. You had not wanted her. She was my own little girl, my sweet treasure. She loved me, and was fearless and true. It was not enough to take my Montfort and my Laurent, Polly must also

take Reine, and drag her down to her level—for everything this woman touches is defiled. What witchcraft has she exercised over you, who care for no one; she who has neither wit, nor beauty, nor intellect, who does not even speak as cultured people do? You tell me I still have my children. No, I have them not. They are dead. And I am a desolate, bereaved mother.”

LIV

THE Simla season was at its height when Allan and I arrived there. At once we were taken by the vortex of gaiety, and every moment of the day was devoted to a succession of entertainments.

Sometimes though, in the gayest of hours, like a ghost at the festival, the memory of that day in Dula would come back, and I remembered the hours which followed our return home. Was it I who had been an actor in the drama, had suffered so intensely, or was it another woman in a weird dream? Was it he, my lover, beside whom I now dwelt, as friends do who have drifted apart for years; then meet again, and tacitly agree not to touch even with the tip of the finger the wound they know is still bleeding?

In hours of agonising suffering—and there have been many, child—instinct always makes me believe that the world stands still and listens to my sorrow. At every new blow, again the dupe of my own folly, I forget that I must bear my grief without help. Thus it was in Dula. I did not remember until I had finished my com-

plaint that life had to go on, and nothing would be changed between your father and me.

I did not see him again that day. The servants brought me the message at dinner that business had called the Sahib away, and he would come back to fetch us all the following morning. Everything must be ready to go down.

He arrived at the appointed hour, courteous and cold.

"My smoking will disturb you," he said, and put my maid beside me in the compartment. Then he left me.

I felt faint-hearted when I stepped onto the veranda.

"Do not unpack my things," he said to the bearer. And to me: "Come with me to your boudoir. I would like to have that out with you about my people." His tone was constrained, and I felt as if the air was full of thunder.

"I do not want long discussions, Eleonore. All I wish to know is, do you retract those words or not?"

"I cannot do so. It would be a lie."

"Then I must leave you again. This time it will be for good."

He went to his room. I heard him giving orders. The brougham left the stables, and drove under the porch. In a few moments he would be gone.

I could not let him leave me. He was still more than my life. Was he alone or not? It did not trouble me. All I knew was that he must not go. I went to his room and fell down before him on my knees.

"Allan, I entreat you, do not leave me! I no longer mind about the children. I mind about nothing in life except you. And if I must take back every word I said I will do so. I do it now, every single word. Forgive me for having spoken. I cannot lose you. I cannot live without you."

"Very well, Eleonore, I will remain if you will write to my people and tell them that you are in the wrong."

"I will do anything you like. I do not care as long as you do not go. I shall say, write, do all you want. Only stay with me."

I thought your father understood a little of what I suffered, for instead of being harsh and disdainful, as he might well have been, he grew more lenient and attentive, less tyrannical too. The next morning he wrote me a letter, saying he would remember nothing of what had passed between us, and hoped I also would forget. "I shall be kind, Eleonore, for I do not wish you to be sad." He was considerate to me as in our beautiful years, and never alluded to the cowardly treachery I had committed towards myself. Now when I look back I believe I could not have acted differently.

We had come to Simla chiefly, I believe, at the instance of Mr. Joscelyn. During the cold season he had come once or twice to the bungalow, and dined with us.

"It seems like yesterday when I saw you last," he said. And then: "Are you happy now?"

"You know I am a mixture of keen optimism and dark pessimism. For the moment the former prevails," I replied.

We had chatted and laughed together, and I again thought his talk even more delightful than his letters. These came regularly, as of old. Sometimes when one was especially interesting I asked Allan to read it, but he seldom cared to do so. I never insisted, remembering what he once had said.

One day we had lunched together at home, Mr. Joscelyn and I. We were standing on the veranda with the servants around us and his carriage under the porch. He

took my hand into both of his, and drew it reverentially to his lips.

"Allow me to pay my tribute before going where my first duty will be to see that the Chiefs pay theirs."

When I told Allan about Mr. Joscelyn's visit, I said how anxious he was that we should come up to Simla, and that his bungalow was at our disposal.

"Allan, will you be annoyed if I tell you that Mr. Joscelyn kissed my hand when he left?"

"Annoyed? Why should I be annoyed? Have not hundreds of men kissed your hand before this? You always give things too much importance, Eleonore, that is nothing more than an act of courtesy."

"Very well, Allan. I only wished to tell you. Here it is not the fashion. You only in the olden days have kissed them many thousand times."

"Would you like to go to Simla, Eleonore? Mr. Pressgrave is always asking us. I wish to give you this pleasure. It will do you good, and me too."

So we had come here. In the journey Allan wished to linger at some of the spots which years before I had visited on my tour. I was young then, and now felt so old. No, it was better I should not see again the sites where I had sown so many hopes. I was strong and calm now—at least I believed that I was—still I dreaded to unbury my dead whom I had bedded so deeply, amid tears.

The first one to greet us was Mr. Joscelyn.

"How did you know we were coming to-day?" Allan asked.

"My *chuprassis* have nothing to do. So to keep them out of mischief, I sent them to watch the trains." Your father seemed to think the plan most ingenious.

There were many social functions—dinners, balls, pic-

nics and luncheon-parties. I spent the first days in a whirl, but always and everywhere I saw Mr. Joscelyn. I wondered why I met him so constantly; but soon I grew to look for his presence, and missed him when a morning or an afternoon passed without our meeting. At the outset Allan had been steeped with me in the excitement of the hour; but soon he grew weary of it and spoke of going back to look after some urgent work and returning later.

"Stay with me, Allan, or let me go back with you! What can I do here alone?"

"There you are, dissatisfied again. I thought you had given that up once and for ever. You are happy here, and get on well with people. When I am away you can ride morning and afternoon with Mr. Joscelyn. He has asked you so often. Why don't you go with him? I know you like to come with me, but it is dull work."

"You always forget that I prefer your society to any other. Here we are much together, and that is why I am happy. If you must go down I know I cannot keep you. But return soon—and write to me sometimes."

So he went.

"Mr. Montrose's absence leaves you more leisure. Will you sometimes receive my guests?" Mr. Joscelyn asked me one day.

I was often hostess for him. I felt surprised how natural it seemed, and told Allan so, when writing to him.

Sometimes when I came home late from a riding expedition or some other entertainment, and there was a dinner-party at "The Retreat," my maid would be waiting there to dress me. In the room which was mine on such occasions even my smallest want was attended to. The pictures, the books I loved, exquisitely bound, my

favourite bon-bons, violets to gladden my eyes, the only perfume I ever used. I wondered how he could know my tastes so well.

Soon after Allan left, Mr. Joscelyn asked me to go out riding with him. I knew what a brilliant horseman he was, and how I should enjoy it; but I also felt that my mind must live on simple food, and it would not be right for the days to come to accustom it to things which formed no part of my life's routine. Thus I always found an excuse.

"Mr. Montrose writes and asks me if we often go out together. What shall I tell him?" This was all, not a word of persuasion, though I knew the pleasure I should have bestowed.

"Tell my husband we are starting to-morrow. I do not believe, though, you will be ready. I always go at such unearthly hours."

Mr. Joscelyn was waiting for me. We went round Elysium Hill and came back by the Mall—simply to reconnoitre.

"This is no ride," he said, coming back. "I somehow had an idea that you were a keen rider. But perhaps you are not quite strong yet? I would love you to have a real ride with me, and tell me that you enjoyed it."

"Do you know what it means never to let oneself go? I and my horse have to do that. We must not be carried away on wings. Our feet must remain on the ground."

"Most of us have to do that; but let me show you some of the fine sites. It will do you good, believe me."

And he was right. With these rides a new life began for me. Years no longer existed. I was young again, and sorrow seemed to fall from me as if it had never been. Allan did not want me; my children had forgot-

ten me; but here was one to whom I was of some value, I who was neglected, despised, who was necessary neither to my children nor to my husband.

Our horses well in hand, their heads level, for they grew great friends and always remained close together, we would gallop for miles never meeting a human being, except sometimes *ryots* going to their work, or tilling their fields in the distance. They would stop to look at us, calm and indifferent. When there was a jump Mr. Joscelyn always insisted on giving me a lead. He rode as only an Englishman can, but I was a good rider. The anxiety he showed that no harm should befall me on our excursions sometimes irritated me.

"Why must you always go first?" I asked him one day. "In the hunting-field no one takes care of another. All my life I have ridden alone, and am not accustomed to be taken care of." The blood surged up to my cheeks, for I felt that I had been disloyal to Allan. But Mr. Joscelyn acted as if he had not heard it, and I was grateful to him.

The chief charm of our rides on those early days were the absence of any personal chord. Nothing was ever said to remind me of the sorrow which had almost engulfed me. The world seemed new, as when I was young. There was no longer anything to wound or humiliate me; all was beautiful and fresh like the glorious panorama which stretched itself out before us. Coming back through the jungle our horses would walk, and we spoke—sometimes in French—of the thousand things we had touched upon in our letters. He seemed to love my country as much as I did, knew all its *coins et recoins*, and understood its people. He had often been at Biarritz, and loved the half-French, half-Spanish people of the Pyrenees.

"If I did not like England so much I would end my days there. Where would you wish to live when you leave India?" he asked me one day.

"I am sure you will not understand me, but nothing could ever console me for the loss of India, except to live in England. And what is stranger still, it must be London. I do not know it even, except as a place through which one goes exhausted from a long railway journey, and as a rule finds bathed in rain and smoke. In fact I have only seen it through a haze. Perhaps that is the best way to see things. I have a presentiment that I shall end my days there."

"Strangely enough that is just what I feel. I spend most of my leave in France or Italy, but there is nothing I cling to half as much as dear old England. It is such a hackneyed expression, yet I cannot find a better one."

"I have become a stranger in my own country. Even in the Paris shops they call me *la dame anglaise*. Imagine my being taken for an Englishwoman; for though I do admire your men, certainly a thousand times more than my own countrymen, yet I love our women best."

"I always think of you as an Englishwoman. At least, as one would say of a horse, you have all their finest points."

It was the first time, though with slight and bantering words, we touched upon personal things—not the past, his life or mine, only the future.

Mr. Joscelyn worshipped my poets, and understood them. In the early morning in the dark jungle when we had left the glorious sunshine and the heat of the open country, I would recite Musset to him, or some other favourite. Then he would talk about them. It was a pleasure to listen to him expressing his great thoughts in beautiful English, with the accent and intonation I love;

which I dreamt my sons, and you too, Reine, would one day have.

Since your father had come back to me I had met men I had known before. At first they sometimes wished to refer—not by so many words, but those things are easily understood—to what had passed between him and me. Soon they saw, however, that the subject was painful, and certainly distasteful to me. It was the business of no one to think, and certainly not to say, who was right or wrong between us two. I was a proud woman and his wife, and any disparagement of him lowered me. Here never the faintest allusion, though Mr. Joscelyn knew, perhaps better than most, what the whole of India had heard; but then he understood what I had suffered, and few have this power. Delicacy, tact, forethought, which even breeding only imparts to its chosen ones—though some men and women are born aristocrats—were natural to him. I had studied men too closely not to appreciate in him the reserved dignity inherent to the finest specimens of the race. He not only applied it in relation to me, but it pervaded his *manière de faire* with high and low. With a heart as lofty and great as his mind, he was a universal favourite, and the friend of all who needed him. There were scores of people every morning at his bungalow, asking for favours; and never one left him with empty hands.

“It gives me so little trouble, and makes them happy,” he once told me. But I knew that even when he met difficulties he did not give up a task which might benefit others. After a brilliant career in India, he had reached the topmost rung of the ladder—one year or two would take him back to England, as we all knew.

We went to all the wild, lovely spots around Simla.

“I must show you everything,” Mr. Joscelyn said.

"You are still a child at heart and do so enjoy scenery. It is no use your telling me that you are like Benjamin Constant, 'disenchanted from your birth.' I seldom have met woman or man with such keen power of enjoyment. Do not take from me the privilege of showing you everything worth a visit. To see you so happy is a cure for my soul."

I sometimes wondered when he was so kind and attentive why he had never married, for he seemed fond of woman's society and certainly was destined by nature to make a wife happy. I never asked him the reason, for I am not in the habit of asking questions, nor was he inclined to speak about himself. We saw a great deal of one another, and when I was at "The Retreat" in the room which the servants called the "Lady Sahib's," or seated at the head of his table, I sometimes forgot all I had suffered. The harmony, the delicate attentions I met at every step, combined to pour balm on my soul.

Allan generally wrote twice a week—it was no longer daily—giving me news; how hot it was in the plains, and that I must appreciate being in cooler latitudes. Not a word of his return, not one of my children. One day I wrote and asked him if I should come down, also, *en passant*, if he sometimes saw Mr. Bandy; for I had not seen the man since my return from Europe.

"What do you mean by that question?" came the reply by return. "Explain yourself at once! What do you wish to infer?"

It had been mere idle curiosity. I did not know if your father ever saw Mr. Bandy. I now thought it rather strange that since Allan had come back to me, he never made any allusion to the man; but felt thankful for it. I explained this to your father. His next letter

contained the formal order not to think of leaving Simla until he himself told me to do so.

"You may expect me any day now, but I will inform you of the exact date by wire."

Soon our letters resumed their customary tone, and the incident was forgotten—at least by me.

The days I spent in the Indian summer-capital were becoming every day more enjoyable. After my ride with Mr. Joscelyn I would dress and breakfast at Mr. Pressgrave's, then often spend the hours until lunch at "The Retreat." Life in India is free and easy. Mother Grundy would be always in hot water unless from the beginning she set her mind at rest about the business of others. My maid, not knowing English, felt dull at Mr. Pressgrave's, so I took her with me, and she sat on the veranda whilst Mr. Joscelyn and I read aloud French or German, each taking the book in turn; I working when he was reading.

"Just like old married people," he said one day.

And I:

"Just what I have dreamt of all my life"—my thoughts turning towards your father who had once whiled away three rainy days in Clarens, reading aloud to me. He read well.

One day we went to Sultanpur to visit the residence of the Chiefs of Kullu. We did most of the way by carriage, and it was rather tedious, if such a name could be applied to any of our excursions; but the scenery enraptured me.

We were standing in the plain which stretched before the Deodar forest. Around us rose the long-tailed, gold-plumed pheasants which we might have touched with our hands, so tame were they, man having seldom disturbed them.

"How all this takes me back to Babar's 'Memoirs,' " he exclaimed. "I would like to dwell here and build my tents."

All I had noted down so carefully Mr. Joscelyn knew by heart.

"What a beautiful thing to have such a memory!" I said.

"This is at least one point where we are alike. No, I did not mean to say that. This is one of the many. Will you come higher? We may meet some ibex and bears. They are timid and will run away. There is no danger, believe me."

"I am not afraid. Once at Mahableschwur, riding alone to Arthur Point, I passed a tiger. I thought it was a calf in the dusk, but my horse trembled under me, and refused to go on. My dear Aurore always did what I wanted finally, so we managed to reach the plateau. Finding no one in the deserted temple, I rang the bell, but not a soul came. And I had to ride back. I learnt afterwards that a man-eater really was about. I think I was brave, don't you?"

"I wish you had not so often to be brave," was all Mr. Joscelyn said.

LV

WE were returning on horseback, Mr. Joscelyn and I, from Annandale, buried deep in the valley. We had galloped round the racecourse as fast as our horses could carry us, and as if there were a prize to strive for. I

had beaten Mr. Joscelyn, which was a rare occurrence, and our horses were tired out.

The temple lay before us in the radiant sunshine. We visited it. The heads of the large monkeys jumping from pilaster to pilaster and looking at us from every corner reminded us of the gargoyles of Notre-Dame. Under the tamarind trees we lingered to speak to the fakir who has made this place famous. He told us of things which happened long ago. I listened rather than talked. The atmosphere, the solitude, the beauty and peace of the landscape wrapped me round. As we were carried homeward by the instinct of our horses, the cares of yesterday, the responsibilities of to-morrow seemed to abandon me, and my soul tranquilly to float in the ether, unconcerned with the hour and the evil that might come.

"That fakir reminds me of my *Sadhu*. He speaks as my friend does, and though I often do not understand him, I like to listen. I suppose it is all a matter of habit on what subjects we allow our minds to dwell. There lies great power in things intangible and the sway they give us over others."

"Do continue, pray! You never speak about yourself, but I have often wished to know what you think, not about things in books such as we have discussed for so long, but about those which touch real life."

"I wonder what you would be interested in? There are many things I might speak to you about. It is true as Goethe says: '*Greift nur hinein in's volle Menschenleben, und wo Ihr's anpackt, da ist es interessant*,' but I believe you would like to hear something about myself. I would like you to know a little of me."

"It is the greatest favour in the world you could bestow upon me," Mr. Joscelyn replied.

"Let me tell you then about my *Sadhu*." And I began to talk to him of all I have told you, and how the man kept watch when everyone had forsaken me, of the long days of my illness, and the longer nights when his presence had been a comfort.

"I often thought about you in those days. No, what do I say? I thought constantly of what I might do to make them seem less long. I was on the point of sending you Porthos."

"You could never have parted with him!"—Porthos was an immense bulldog, most ferocious-looking, and of that ugliness which I admire in men and dogs. "He would have been a *bon camarade*. You know I love him, even his very name. D'Artagnan and Athos never had any chance beside him. Porthos would have protected me that night of the rioters"—I told him the tale.

"I thought it was bad, very bad, but I believed you were well cared for and protected. Great God! you alone on that night. Do you know what is the hardest thing of all my life? I have thought it so many times of late."

My mind went back to Allan, and the long months which had become years—all the love I had offered, and which had been despised. . . .

"I know many which are hard. Is the degree of suffering really of importance?"

"Some things are more difficult to bear than others; but the hardest of all is to do nothing when one wishes to do everything."

I thought he must have remarked that Allan did not care for me as much as some husbands do, but I knew he would never tell me so. I was anxious that even he, my friend, should not know—for there was no doubt Mr. Joscelyn had become my friend. I should miss him

very much, miss him more than I had thought it possible to miss anyone, except your father.

Allan was coming soon. His last letter told me so. It would be better to return with him, take up quickly the old life, for fear friendship, which was throwing its tendrils, should tie us so closely that I at least would miss Mr. Joscelyn too much. His life was so full, and mine, except for my work and the social functions which were rather a burden, was so empty.

That morning at Annandale brought back into my life something I had needed—how badly I only knew now that it had come—sympathy, that most precious and tender of all gifts. In the darkness in which I was groping, one hand at least was held out to me. It was that of a man who suffered as I did, though differently; for two hearts never suffer alike.

“We have known each other now for so many years, Mr. Joscelyn. You at least say so, for really I do not remember when it was that we first met. You are right, we know little, almost nothing of one another. I think we wrote some rather good letters. You once told me you had kept mine. We might get them bound some day, to distribute among our friends or to be published anonymously—people are rather interested in that kind of literature.”

“I am afraid there would not be a large public for them. What the world wants is the heart, not the head. Our letters are clever, that is the most we can say of them; but the world wants no brain, it has already too much; it wants to be stirred by the voice of passion.”

Nothing in Mr. Joscelyn had ever indicated to me that there were in him those feelings to which he alluded. I had often wondered at one thing. Had he loved as

other men, and why had he not married? In his brilliant career, able to bestow upon a woman all that charms her, I wondered why he had remained a bachelor.

"Do tell me, Mr. Joscelyn, why you have never married? You seem made to make a woman happy."

"Would you really like to know?" he asked.

"Yes, I would like to know. A woman is always interested in questions of love."

"It is because I have loved a woman for many years—ten years. But who can say how long it is? To me it seems always."

I wondered who it could be? But I waited for him to continue.

"I have often tried, but I could only think of her. I never could have loved another woman."

"And does she care for you?"

"She is not free. She is married and knows nothing of what fills my heart for her. I see her sometimes, not very often, and never with a word would I betray to her my secret."

"Is she happy? Does she love her husband?"

"Yes, she loves him, though he does not deserve that any woman's heart should beat for him." He laughed so bitterly that I reined in my horse. His also stopped. When I looked at him, his eyes were full of unshed tears, and I felt sorry I had touched upon this wound. But he continued: "Can you call love what I feel for her, the devotion of a lifetime—for I seem to have known her ever since I can remember—the passionate sorrow at her suffering, the yearning to be of use to her, for she is very unhappy? You now understand that the most difficult thing in life is to do nothing, when we know there is no sacrifice we would not bring."

Who could that woman be? I wondered. If she was unhappy, would it not comfort her to know that he suffered with her?

"She might feel stronger if she knew that you think of her."

"She has never cared for me, and only loves her husband. If I told her of my love she would resent the insult, and I should lose her for ever."

We spoke little on our way back, for I was sad for Mr. Joscelyn. I felt sure he knew it; but any word of sympathy would have turned the knife in the wound. So I changed the subject, and we spoke of indifferent things. I envied the woman who was so discreetly, so devotedly loved, so greatly loved, for love needs food and withers when no care is taken. I now understood why Mr. Joscelyn was so tender to all who were in need of him—it was because he suffered himself.

At home I found a letter from your father, telling me I might expect him any day. I was glad. "I wish he would come soon," I said to myself. "Life passes here like an enchanted dream. When Allan is away his letters are kind. My heart is much more sensible than when I am beside him, and if separation strengthens affection, perhaps when we meet again, he may care more for me."

In the evening the house-party at Mr. Pressgrave's went to a native gathering. I naturally too. Mr. Joscelyn was not there. I wanted to tell him that Allan was coming back.

Next morning I asked why I had not seen him.

"Will you be surprised when I tell you that I had to remain at home last night to bury my dead?"

"All those who lead full lives have to do that sometimes. But we will not speak to-day about ourselves,

nor about books or poets. Let me tell you a little about my life at home. I am sure it will interest you."

For the first time, I touched upon the part of my life of which I have told you so little; all my hopes and dreams of doing great things—then some day when life was over, feeling rich and proud because the burden of a few had grown less. It was again impersonal, neither he nor I but others—the world at large. All those who suffered were the theme of that morning. But it was not I alone who spoke, he laid before me the schemes, practicable, tangible, which his great mind had conceived—charity, without the sting of the gift, the moral lowering and feeling of incompetency. There would be a raising of many, practical help, encouragement, the building up of mind and body. I have known some give large gifts, but this was the gift of his whole fortune which he would dispense royally himself, devoting the rest of his life to it.

I listened, almost hanging on his words. "You will do all those great things, and I cannot even be there to admire you."

"I do not know. The women of the French Renaissance had men as spiritual friends to assist them in their charities. I hope some day you will help me to make others happy."

"I may have other duties then, perhaps. I have two boys. You have never seen them. They are in Scotland. And then there is the little daughter you know."

I would have loved to talk with him about you, just a little. The thought of you children suddenly gripped me. I wondered how I could be so light-hearted? But he continued:

"You are just like those noble ladies who hid their royal charities with as much care as others take to-day

to publish them. You often make me think of that beautiful wave which swept over your country, at the beginning of the Italian Wars."

"No doubt from that moment women became the leading spirits in France. They are the mothers of the Frenchwomen of to-day."

"My sister Marie leads that life in England, in the home where we were children together. She waits for me, and forgets the time in troubling about others."

A sister! Any bachelor with a sister inspired me with terror!

"Is she married?"

"No, Marie is like me, *éprise de l'idéal*, and has found no husband to come up to it. She knows you almost as well as I do."

I looked at him surprised. I had never heard of her.

"She has known you for a long time, and in her letters often speaks of you. She was very glad when she heard of your recovery. I hope you will know my sister some day. She is a good, noble woman and loves you."

I was not as astonished as I might have been, and only understood what the word literally implied—someone who was interested in me. I was accustomed, as I told you—it sounds conceited, but it is not so, child—to have affection showered upon me. From the time I was ill strangers I should never meet had written to me, and were so good that now I feel ashamed I paid no greater heed to them. But when the letters began pouring in, my heart was crying day and night for your father's love to come back to me.

I cannot tell you how the knowledge came, I do not know myself. If gradually or all at once? Never with one word did he betray it, but one day I knew, and then it was as if I had known it always, that Raymond

Joscelyn loved me, that I was the unhappy woman for whom he would have given his life. This I wish to remember for his sake, for mine, for the sake also of the love which bore no fruition—where tears were the only harvest we gathered.

He did not tell me he loved me. At life's dawn words may be needed. I do not believe they ever are. A woman certainly requires no spoken utterance, she knows those things; and I was no longer a girl. Nothing had been said, no irremediable seal set to keep us apart, your father's wife and him—and the days were slowly wearing on.

We were out riding in the afternoon, and were to meet at a ball in the evening. I laughed gaily, but my heart felt sad, as hearts do when beautiful things come to an end. We had been so happy together, and he was my dear friend; but I dreaded that at some time or other he might speak, or I understand too clearly. They had all gone, all those I had loved—husband and children—now I was going to lose him, and my heart was heavy. Fatality, which so often had strangled me, decided that he, so strong and true, should set his heart upon me. Any woman might well have been proud of his love! Why had it turned to me, who had nothing to bestow? I had looked upon him as a friend, forgetting that the hour would come, as it always does for man and woman, when love would assert its claim, and friendship no longer exist.

"Leave me alone, I shall send for you when I need you," I said to my maid when I reached home.

What would the evening bring us? What words pass? Should I ask him never to tell me that he loved me, to remain my friend? What right had I to do such a thing? Perhaps I was mistaken, and he loved another

woman for whom and with whom he suffered! No, this was not possible. His face would not have had that look of despair, when I asked him where he would go when he left the Service, and if he was glad to go.

"I do not believe I shall ever have the courage to leave this country. How can I say what I shall do? I dare not think of what to-morrow may bring."

His eyes held a world of woe. I understood that his heart had gone out to me in love—to me, the phantom of the happy, proud girl, the weary, sad, disillusioned woman who had no longer any heart left. But was this true? No, I still felt capable of strong, passionate love, but it was for him—who had despised it.

"Come back to me, Allan," my heart cried. "Come back to your love, to your wife. Life will be beautiful again and I the proudest, happiest woman. Take me in your arms, hold me there. I have wandered so far, and have come back to you. Open your heart to me. Life was only good when it was ours. I have grown weary, I cannot begin again. A few years are left, then we shall leave this world. Make it again beautiful for me. To belong to one sanctifies the gift of self. I never can, I never shall, belong to anyone but you."

Those who love are selfish. I only loved Allan, and though I felt sorry for Raymond Joscelyn, I felt much more sorry for myself. The passionate longing for your father brought him nearer to me, and hope, ever born afresh, made me see the future radiant.

There was a knock at the door.

"Has Madame seen the letter I put on the dressing-table?" Georgette asked.

Buried in my thoughts I had overlooked it. Your father had written. His message had come at the moment I needed it most. I opened it feverishly.

296 A MOTHER IN EXILE

It contained but a few lines:

"I shall be with you next week. Mr. Bandy kindly consents to come up with me. Arrange with Mr. Pressgrave to have a room for him, and send a telegram to say you have done so. ALLAN."

Nothing else, not a word of love. I felt wounded to the heart. He knew how much I disliked Mr. Bandy. He had never brought him to our house. This I had achieved. Now he was bringing him here, where his very presence would pollute the air for me—so strong was my antipathy. I needed your father's own presence more than ever—needed him as a shield between me and the thoughts which suddenly had come to tempt me. And instead of that, he was bringing his false friend to whom I attributed all our unhappiness. This could not, this must not be. I sent a telegram at once, imploring him to come alone. If not I would return. My whole being quivered with indignation and wounded pride—with grief too.

We were sitting out a dance, Raymond Joscelyn and I, in a little arbour made with foliage, such as people often have in India. I had promised him the first dance weeks before. Now we spoke little and only made the most casual remarks. I was thinking of Allan.

We grew silent, listening to the gay notes of the dance music, carried to us by the night air. I shuddered.

"Do tell me why you are troubled? I know I cannot help you. Still do tell me."

Before I could reply, I heard footsteps on the gravel. Someone went into the arbour next to ours. The servants were beginning to light the Chinese lanterns; but we were still in the dark.

I heard my name.

"She is here, I believe. Is it not unfortunate she ever went back to that Montrose?"

"It is a pity no one opens her eyes. She and Joscelyn are made for one another. What a splendid fellow he is! Do you think she encourages him?"

"Not she! She has no thought but for her husband. Can you understand her caring for that man after all she has gone through?"

"Women are strange creatures. You should know it best." A laugh, and then the footsteps went away.

Neither of us spoke for a moment as the voices grew fainter.

"You are right, Mr. Joscelyn, I am troubled to-night. I would like to go home and forget."

When my rickshaw came, he asked permission to walk beside it. As we parted, he said:

"I believe you know the truth. Do not be afraid. I promise I shall never speak unless you set me free. I do not count. Your happiness is the one and only thing I care for."

Then he took my hand and kissed it. He had never done so since that day he had called upon me after my recovery.

In my room, I found your father's reply to my telegram.

"Expect us both, and wait for us where you are."

LVI

"Tu étais à mon coeur une source d'eau bonne
Qu'on sait dans les rochers sans la dire à personne,
Et que dans sa mémoire on réserve avec soin
Pour aller à la soif, la chercher au besoin.

.
Où trouver maintenant ma pauvre groutte d'eau,
Et ce banc sur la route où poser mon fardeau?"

THE ball took place on a Saturday. I spent the whole of the following day in my room, to look things straight in the face. In the evening I sent a note to Raymond Joscelyn.

"Meet me to-morrow morning where we rested on our first ride. I have decided for both of us."

At dawn, long before him, I reached the plateau where we had lingered that day, laughing and talking under the beautiful spreading Indian trees. How long ago this seemed!

All was still, shadowy around me. I stood alone in the immense solitude of the plateau. Some vultures passed, hovering high above my head. The grey light moved slowly over the vast plain, the crows were beginning to make their deafening noise, when suddenly a blood-red glare shot up from the horizon, and the distant trees which were my goal stood inky black against the intense purple of the sky, streaked with red and gold. Thus life had seemed to me at its dawn.

What had I come here to do? What comfort was mine to dispense?

Heart and mind grew calmer whilst I watched for him amidst this splendour. Even now, after years, before the brilliancy of that morning, the black days of my life pale and grow grey.

When he came I read on his face that he had suffered more than I.

"You have been my friend, my very dear friend now for long, it seems very long to-day. You do not know what this friendship has been, how it has helped me, how grateful I am."

He did not speak at first. There was despair in his eyes, as if he wondered if I had come to tell him this.

"I have done nothing for you. To know you has been a privilege. You speak about what has been?"

"No, I have not come to speak to you about friendship. Until I knew you I did not believe that man and woman could be friends. Then you entered my life, and I needed you, and believed that such a thing was possible. Now it has all come to an end. Fate again claims me. All those to whom I clung have deserted me. Why must friendship also '*Lieb' und Leiden werden*'?"

"Do you speak of yourself also, or only of me; of what has been or of what is? I told you the night before last, I still say, your happiness is the only thing that matters. I will not touch with one word upon what fills my whole being. Friendship is a fine thing—an art. I only dread that you should think it has become an impossibility between you and me. It is not so for me. I ask nothing from you. I shall be satisfied as I have been for years. I shall accept—yes, I will—that you go away, if only you will sometimes

write to me as in the past, and let me know that I am not forgotten."

"I shall accept from you whatever you have come to bring," he went on. "I have no right to appeal to your heart. I know you also suffer. There is only one thing I dread. Put nothing irremediable between us. Remember I have lived on renunciation for so many long years. I ask nothing from you. Only—do not cut yourself off from me for ever. I believe I could not live were you taken away from my life."

There was passion in his voice, there was tenderness too. I understood better than before how nobly he had suffered, and I felt proud that it was for me.

At this very moment the sun appeared at the horizon, red, glorious, bathing all around us in light and radiance, and the fetters fell from my soul. I felt inspired with courage to tell him what I had decided, and had come to tell him.

"I know that you love me. I have known it for some time past, and I am glad of it."

Was it the brilliant sun or some inner light which gave his face that expression?

"Great God be thanked! At last! Is it possible? Tell me, do you love me?"

"A lie would be easy, but unworthy of you and of me. Do I love you? I ask it myself. I know I cannot let you go out of my life, that you are the only thing I have left, that you are as necessary to me as the air I breathe. Is that love? I do not know myself. I am afraid—and in those hours which have just parted us, I have put the question so often that at last I no longer understand its meaning. I never have been able to find the answer. Therefore I have come to tell you I believe my heart is no longer capable of love. Instead

of pride and happiness, love has only tears for me. This is not the way you should be loved."

"I do not ask how you love me. Mine will shelter and strengthen your soul. All you need is happiness. I feel it is almost cruel to speak of love to you. I have built castles in the air, one after another. At this moment even I dare not speak to you of what I feel, for I cannot yet see the future calm and happy before me, as it must be when you are my wife. There is so much I cannot touch upon—but you know what I mean."

"Yes. You mean my husband and children. But first I must speak to you about myself. Have I the right to accept the gift of your love when my heart is so bruised, so sad and empty that I believe even you can never vivify it? There are many things which knit our souls together, inclinations, tastes in common; all that has made us friends—and in the days to come would tie us still more closely as companions. But marriage demands more, and the blows of adversity have crushed all that out of me. I feel sore and wounded. You seem to me the realisation of what I still at times dream; but I am a weary, disillusioned woman. I do not come to you a loving, inexperienced girl, I come to you as a woman who knows life, and has pressed it to her lips. You are to me all that is good, noble and true, but I have not the right to take the gift you offer. I have no gift to give in return."

"I shall ask nothing from you. Love is not always as you describe it. Your love will come to me. I have no doubt it will. All I ask is the honour, the privilege, the joy of making you forget all you have suffered."

"I do not come to you as woman comes to man at life's dawn. I have been a wife and a mother. My children I have lost—all of them. I thought of them

when you were surprised at my admiring your *cloisonné* vase since there is a flaw in it. You were right. Long before the day my husband deserted me I was his wife but in name. Since he came back to me, we have only lived as friends. The law of his country—you know these things far better than I—does not call this reconciliation. I can obtain a divorce in less than two years. I have thought before of leaving him. I have decided now to do it. Then I shall come to you, and come free, untrammelled.”

“I do not doubt the future, and shall receive you in a manner worthy of you. I shall wait for you as long as life lasts. What merit is there in being patient when one is sure of the goal—as I am sure of you? I have waited for you for years. Now I know that you will come. Time—what is time, from the moment that I see life with you beside me? In the old home in England, which will be ours some day, you will be my *châtelaine*; the poor will be our children, and I shall worship you, as the noblest of women, as my wife. What are you going to do when you leave this? If I could only come with you! But of course I know that is impossible.”

“I have to go home.” A shadow crossed his face, as if in this word there lay pain for him—“and see to things. Then I shall take the first P. & O. boat. I arranged everything by telegram last night.”

“My sister Marie would be proud and happy to receive you. Together you would wait for my arrival. You know the term of my service expires in two years. It is better for both of us that I remain here. Is it possible that the world contains so much happiness?”

His joy almost made me feel sad. Why was it not contagious, as I had hoped? He did not notice it. His heart was full of the thought of the days to come.

"May I say something? Yes, you are generous and will understand. I have asked your permission to arrange things for you. I will cable a credit to London. They will all be so glad to have you in the old home. Do you know, I never thought anything in life could even approach my happiness when I think that some day you will be mine to love and shelter and make happy. I will make you so happy that you will forget everything and only know I love you as never woman was loved before."

"How good of you to speak as you do. I wish I could remain now, always beside you—I feel so unutterably tired. It is just like you to think of those minor things which are so important; but there is no need for you to trouble about them. I would love to go to your sister. She is a good woman, and I feel her close to my heart; but I cannot go to England, at least not at once. There is Madame de Saint-Jean. I told you about her. She is old, and has loved me as a mother for years. All seems strange to me. I am dazed. You know I wish to do all I can to make you happy, all in my power. Let us say good-bye here, now. As soon as I can I will write to you. Au revoir—in Europe—perhaps in England."

"Au revoir," he said, "you who are more than my life, my only love—my wife, some day. Good-bye."

Thus we parted.

After I had ridden on for a little I turned round and saw him standing where I had left him, on the escarpment of the plateau, waving his hand to me.

When I reached my room, heart, soul and mind felt strangely disconcerted and disobedient to my will. We had set the seal of the irremediable on our lives. I had promised Raymond Joscelyn to be his wife. This put for ever a barrier between myself and Allan.

It was of him I thought—not of you.

How was it possible, if I left him, that ever again I should move about, laugh, talk like an ordinary being, I who all through life had only known the desire to be with him? Now that I was on the point of losing your father irretrievably by my own free will it seemed it could not be. It was not possible that I should rise in the morning, go to bed at night, without the hope of ever seeing him again; accomplish the everyday things of life with that big, throbbing pain at my heart.

We should be parted—he live alone. It did not matter where. I with another who was not he, my all-in-all, the lover of my radiant youth. I should move about in that other man's house, have to fall into his habits, be with him always, and as long as he wanted me, belong to him, be his property. He would possess the right to the most intimate details of my life—to myself if he chose. I was a woman. I knew that sooner or later love demands its right, and that the gift must be given royally. If unwillingly, sorrow and bitterness of heart would follow—love would suffer and die. I knew—I was smarting under it myself—there must be no denial between man and woman who belong one to the other. Allan and I had touched all the chords of Love. Their echo remained with me.

I had thought of all this yesterday—ever since that night when I had understood—but it had been different. I believed then that I should be warmed at the rays of Raymond Joscelyn's love, that I should behold love again, as once it had risen at your father's call—white, frightened, wonderful. But it now seemed veiled, dark, full of sadness. Love had once vanquished me. It still held me in bondage.

I ordered my maid to tell Mr. Pressgrave that I was

suffering from malaria. Dr. Linder was in Simla, and I sent for him.

"Prescribe rest for me, and say that people are not to come and bother me. I must be alone."

My kind adviser for body and soul asked me no questions. It was not his habit.

"Take it easy," he said, when he left. "Believe me, nothing is worth troubling about. Things are never as bad—nor as good either—as we at first believe them to be. Send for me if I can do anything more for you."

The next morning brought me a letter from Allan, a letter such as I had not had for years. My joy was so great that I did not try to understand how it was so different from his former ones. It was full of most tender sympathy and care for my happiness. "He had rather neglected me of late, but all was changed now. He was coming alone on Saturday to remain as long as I cared to keep him with me." Tender, loving, and, as I then thought, true, it took me back to all that once was so dear.

The past still claimed me. The future must be shared with your father. I never could belong to another man. I decided it must not be.

Now when I look back I understand things better than I did then. It was not that I allowed happiness to pass for the sake of a few paltry conventions which I have always disdained, nor for the sake of what people might say. I cared for no one. Those I knew would not have moved a little finger to make my life less desolate. I passed happiness by, because without your father there was none for me.

I cannot believe that I willingly inflicted an injury upon Raymond Joscelyn. My love to Allan made me selfish and cruel.

On Tuesday night I wrote to him that I had been mistaken, that I was remaining in Simla for a little, and begged him that we should never meet again.

I told him that I loved your father.

LVII

*"Und mein Stamm sind jene Asra,
Welche sterben, wenn sie lieben."*

It was Friday. I had spent the two previous days in a round of amusements which I hoped would give me no time for reflection. Thus only, it seemed to me, I could bear the suspense until your father's arrival.

I had failed. My mind remained disquietened, pregnant with forebodings, and my heart was full of a great ache. I clung to the thought that Allan was coming; still I felt troubled about Raymond Joscelyn. I tried to shake off the despair of doubt which seemed to enter by every pore, for even whilst following my heart's preference, I had suffered in inflicting pain upon him who loved me. I feared my letter must have seemed cold and distant; but it was impossible to tell him how strong were the bonds which tied me to your father, and I never possessed the gift, which some have, of telling disagreeable or painful things in a mild, commonplace way.

I started early and rode alone for a great distance, as I had done the two mornings before.

I had come out to tire myself physically, to kill the dull gnawing prick of heart or conscience, and had galloped for miles, but I felt as if I could never tire myself out. So I reined up in the shadow of the wooded hill,

to look into the solid darkness of the jungle. It seemed like my life. The monkeys were not concerned that day in my doings. Nowhere I saw one. Sometimes birds in passing would almost touch me. They were not afraid; and this brought me consolation.

.

There was a gay luncheon-party that day at Mr. Pressgrave's, and I knew Raymond Joscelyn had been invited; but he was not there when I sat down among the merry crowd. Was he to keep away from everything now on my account? People would gossip after having seen us so much together—think perhaps we had quarrelled. Even the thought seemed strange in connection with him, always so calm and courtly.

We had all been invited to spend the afternoon on the river, and take tea at a bungalow on its banks. Mr. Huntley had asked us to visit his lovely garden. He had startled Simla for years as a Don Juan; now his habits had grown more sedate and he cultivated the most exquisite flowers. I was bound to go. I felt weary of this incessant round of meaningless gaiety, yet I had to do what everyone did. They had been good hours I had spent with Raymond Joscelyn, very different from these. The thought of him felt like a remorse. I should be glad to meet him, and have it over. I longed to be home again, but it was better to see him first.

I was thinking of this and many more things touching him, but the thoughts were sad. Meanwhile I had to keep up the flow of conversation with Mr. Pressgrave, my neighbour at lunch, and laugh and seem interested in all that was going on around me. Across the table one man inquired from another why Mr. Joscelyn was not here, and our host replied that before tiffin he had received a

verbal message. The Sahib was too ill to write, the *chuprassi* had told him, and asked to be excused from coming, as he had hoped. They all three thought it was malaria, and the conversation went on. I longed to know more, and felt impelled to go to him. But he was ill. Most likely in bed. By what right should I go? This was not possible.

The owner of the sylvan retreat took us to admire his fowls. They were in magnificent houses which he had just imported from England. He told us at length the size of the eggs the hens were laying, and what a great thing it would be if the natives adopted the coops which they could put on the *Maidans*. There was the difficulty of the snakes to be solved, and he began to explain. Unfortunately I never was interested in fowls! At last he finished. It had been agony to my mind to have to pretend to be interested. I did not mind so much the garden. It was beautiful and I love flowers. Some of the violets Mr. Joscelyn brought me when I was ill he had obtained from Mr. Huntley, who was an old friend of his. The chrysanthemums were in full bloom. Never in India had I seen such lovely specimens.

"You evidently understand how to take as good care of flowers as of the hearts of women," I said to our host.

A servant came to call him away before he could reply. Those around me were still laughing and asking where I found such *à propos* remarks, when Mr. Huntley returned.

He came straight across the lawn to me. I expected a bantering reply; but I saw the tears were streaming from his eyes.

"Joscelyn is dying," he said. "I have just received the message."

There was not one moment's doubt in my mind. I

must go to him. It was impossible that he was ill. He could not die.

My horse stood saddled in the courtyard. I had intended having a ride afterwards.

Whilst I was dressing there was a knock at the door.

"There is a letter for Madame; but the bearer has strict orders only to hand it to her personally. It is the *chuprassi* who always brings the letters of Monsieur Joscelyn to Madame. He says his master is very ill, and that if Madame will find him alive she must come at once."

I jumped on my horse and tore open the envelope.

This was his letter to me:

"You tell me you have been mistaken. You say it cannot be. Even now at the end of all earthly hopes I can understand that where you once have loved you must love to the end, you cannot betray.

"You still love him? Great God! Is this possible? And yet had you been mine, you also would have clung to me, and I should have held you so fast that death itself could not have parted us.

"It is not your fault that you could not love me, but life without you is meaningless, for I have loved you ever since I can remember.

"You were the boy's one dream. In youth's glorious days the incarnation of all that is noblest in woman. My thoughts—let me tell you this at last—have turned towards you for years with a man's passionate yearning. You were to me the heart's one desire. You were my world, Eleonore.

"Do you remember telling me how my letters inspired you with courage in Scotland? What you must have suffered there, poor child, and all along!

"You say we must never meet, never write again, and speak of the solace that years will bring. Had you needed me, I must have remained, but life without you is impossible. I cut it short.

"I shall wait until the last, then send this to you. When it reaches you the end will be near. If you can, come to me. I must see your face once again before the night hides it from me for ever. RAYMOND."

I went straight up to his room. Dr. Linder was waiting before the door.

"I am here to tell you that but little time is left. He is very bad. I do not understand how he can bear the pain."

"Can you not help him—save him? Why don't you do something?"

"He sent for me when it was too late. The only thing he wants me to do is to say he died of cholera. Go in. He is waiting for you."

The nurses left when I entered the room. We were alone.

"Raymond, what have you done? Do tell me. Why have you done this?"

How pale, how grey his face looked!

"Call me Raymond again."

I knelt down beside him and took his hand into both mine. It felt cold already.

"Raymond! Raymond! Can nothing be done for you?" A smile came over his face, then the pain gripped him. I waited until it had passed.

"I can count upon Dr. Linder. I do not wish the world to know—for your sake."

"I cannot lose you, Raymond. I should always have been your friend."

"It would not be enough. Now that I know what you have suffered, I could not go on living, powerless to help you. I should suffer too much, and I long for rest. Could you but have loved me, you dearest of women!"

It seemed as if claws were tearing at my heart. I gently stroked his forehead with my hand.

"Had it been possible for me to leave him, you dear one, I would have come to you. But you understand that my heart clings where once it took root. Oh! Raymond, forgive me."

Some of the old fire and passion came back to those eyes over which death was slowly throwing its veil. A new spasm swept over him, and held us speechless.

Then he drew himself with a supreme effort towards the edge of the bed.

"Do one thing for me, Eleonore, and it will not be so hard to leave you. Lie beside me for one moment. Let me think you are mine. I entreat you, darling. It will help me on the road."

I put my cheek against his. How cold it felt!

"Raymond, I cannot do it. It would not be loyal. Were it not for him to whom I belong I would have loved you, you the dearest and best. Say that you forgive me!"

"I know you cannot be different. Had you been otherwise I could not have worshipped you as I do. You are my saint, Eleonore. There is a God. He is great. He may have compassion with us. If I could only believe that there is a Heaven, and that I should meet you again! They say there is no marrying or giving in marriage there. What would Heaven then be for me? Had I held the world in my hand, I would have let it fall, to clasp you to me."

312 A MOTHER IN EXILE

"Raymond, if only I could also die!"

"This I must do alone. Good-bye, Eleonore. Do not grieve. It was the best thing in life to have known you."

He understood what I suffered, he who always understood the suffering of others.

"We must part now. Time is short. I have to ask you for one last favour."

I thought he would ask me to kiss him. I felt an intense longing to do so.

"Dr. Linder has my authority, he will do everything. *Ma pauvre âme s'en ira plus en paix*, if I know that you will be here to-morrow when the last act of the pageant is played." Then, taking a closed envelope from under his pillow: "Read this to-night when you are alone. And now good-bye. The pains get too bad—and I have to give some final orders. Good-bye, Eleonore, *Adieu, mon Eléonore*, for this you are. Nothing can change that."

I was still kneeling so as to be closer to him. I took his two hands into mine, kissed them again and again. Why was death leaving me here, with Raymond's eyes looking into mine as if they were asking me not to let him go alone. I longed to put my lips to his. Perhaps he was afraid I should refuse, as I had refused before.

I drew still closer.

"God bless you, Raymond. Oh! that I could have loved you."

He moved his hand, as if the pain of the impossible dream was too great. Then a smile flitted over his face and he passed his hand gently down my arm, as if to assure himself that I was still there.

One last look. I knew that living my eyes would never behold him again.

LVIII

My maid had told Mr. Pressgrave not to expect me to dinner.

I came home late that night, too early yet for me; but my horse refused to go another step. I envied him for feeling tired. It seemed as if I should never sleep again.

The *chuprassi* was waiting for me before my door.

"Joscelyn Sahib died one half-hour after the Lady Sahib left. Never will such a Sahib come back to India. He said good-bye to us all and has left a year's wages, perhaps two or three. I do not remember, Lady Sahib, I am so unhappy."

The poor old man broke into sobs. It was just like Raymond, worthy of his generous heart, to remember the poor people who were dependent upon him.

The doors to the veranda stood wide open. I heard the other guests coming home, the noise of the wheels and the laughter of all those happy people. It grew late, very late. In a few hours I should no longer be alone, for Allan was coming. Why was he not here with me?

I went into the garden, down to the small lake where the goldfish darted about during the day. The beauty of the Indian night was mirrored in the water. Suddenly I remembered the letter. I opened my riding habit and took it out. It was too dark to read, so I went back to my room. There were only a few lines, four or five at the most, making me sole heiress and executrix of all

Raymond Joscelyn's property in India and England. His vast fortune, all he could dispose of, was given absolutely to "his friend, the woman he most honoured and admired." This was all.

I had never bestowed the least gift upon him, I could not accept what he offered. It was not mine. The solitary woman in England, his sister, would never have her loved one, even dead, for Raymond wished to be buried in India. I would not take from her what perhaps might be a comfort—as it is to most. I had given him nothing, living—dead, I would take nothing from him.

I took my matches and went out into the garden with the paper. In the soft darkness of the night the wooded hills to the west had almost disappeared, become one with the blackness. The night watchman was shouting to keep the straying pigs from coming into the garden. The match I struck startled the fish, one or two of them jumped and made a slight noise. Then the water grew quiet again.

Suddenly a glorious streak of light crossed the sky, leaving a bright lustre, as does a meteor when it passes. In the distance the plateau where we had stood together, Raymond and I, emerged from the blackness.

There he stood, as I often see him now, as my eyes beheld him on that morning when I had promised to be his wife—under the ardent sun of that solitary Indian plain, in the full glorious summer of life, at the zenith of his power, the summit of his ambition, and, as we then believed, close to his heart's desire.

One moment only, then all grew night again.

I lighted another match and put it to the sheet of paper—the last thing his hand had touched and given me. The red flames leapt round the words, as if they did not wish to destroy them. At last they faded away,

and I scattered the black ashes across the lake where the goldfish slept; then went back to my room.

.

Early in the morning I went to the house where he always had waited to welcome me. Outside there were rows and rows of carriages, but the garden was still, as if it also was mourning him.

In the hall stood the outer coffin, of light teak-wood. On it shone a brass plate, loaded with all his orders. The court dress he wore on great occasions lay ready to be put on the bier. Around it stood the high dignitaries of the Service, his colleagues, his friends. They were talking away. They did not seem sad. His death for each of them meant promotion. They bowed to me when I passed through the line they were already forming. They knew I was his friend, and thought it natural that a woman's eyes should see all was ready, that a woman's hand should bed him for his last sleep.

The men were waiting before the door of his room to carry him down in the casket after I had been there. Such had been his last orders. When I entered the two nurses went away. They had watched by him as I had told them to do the evening before. How often during that long night I had envied them!

As I neared the spot where my dear dead lay, sobs almost human came from the foot of the bed, then a long-drawn howl, and Porthos, his bulldog, sat upright as if to defend his master. I put my arms round him, pressing him close to me. He seemed to understand that I had come to bring our dead some comfort and licked my hand, then lay down moaning.

Raymond was sleeping peacefully. His face was calm and more handsome even than in life. It no longer bore

that expression of dumb pain which of late had so often troubled me.

Now that he was dead, he was mine. What you give to the dead you do not take from the living. His hands, which always had been open to give royally, I caressed and folded; and close to them I laid the flowers he had loved, violets, my flowers, as he called them.

I took him in my arms, and kissed him again and again on the lips which, living, had never tasted mine. I lay beside him, so that his poor soul in the Beyond might feel at last that he was not quite alone. With my arms still around him I spoke to him as if he yet could hear. If only I could believe that he heard! What did I say to him? What passed between his soul and mine? I could not tell you even if I would.

I took all the flowers. With the violets I covered his dear face, the white ones were his shroud. No eyes in life must ever behold him again, mine were the last to rest on him. Thus he had wished it. *L'heure sans fin de l'éternelle absence* had begun.

I opened the door, and made a sign to the men who were waiting.

Then I left the house.

A dinner, followed by a native reception and a ball, was to take place that night in honour of the Plenipotentiaries of a great Power who were staying at the Vice-regal Lodge. In the land whence the envoys came, death is an occasion of rejoicing; they would not have understood that for us it was one of mourning.

Your father arrived just before dinner. I trembled when I saw him, for I hoped he brought me comfort.

"I have so much to say to you, Allan! I am so glad you have come."

"Of course you have many things to tell me. How

did the burial go off? Poor Joscelyn! I got the news on the way early this morning. I wish I had been in time. I suppose the whole of the Service was there?"

"Allan, I cannot go to that ball to-night. I will go to dinner if you wish me to. I am so sad about Mr. Joscelyn."

"I can quite understand that. He was a fine fellow. But then, you know, death will come to all of us. I thought you did not mind about these things." And seeing that I wished to linger beside him in his room, "You must go to the ball. Mr. Pressgrave counts upon you to amuse those foreign fellows. With all the languages you know, there will surely be one they understand. Go and get dressed, and make yourself look nice. Put on the pearl necklace. We will talk about things later. Try and look your brightest, as you always do when you like. It is the least you can do for Mr. Pressgrave. You do look out of sorts!"

Your father was right. And then—Raymond would not have wished me to honour his memory by weeping and cutting myself off from the world, but by mastering my sorrow. To feel strong in the thought of him was the fairest tribute I now could offer. I would tell your father everything to-night—everything. Then take up my burden, if it still remained after I had bared my heart to him, and bravely bearing my grief, live it down.

The dinner was in full swing. The cool champagne sparkled in the goblets; noiselessly the barefooted servants were carrying round the dishes and filling up the glasses on the table covered with flowers. The air was laden with their scent and the perfume used by the dazzling women whose laughter ran through the room like a ripple on water. With gay talk and witty sayings, with bare arms and shoulders, they challenged the men, who

responded to the call; and the flow of words went on merrily.

I was sitting beside Mr. Woodford, the friend of whom I once told you that in later years he sent me news of you. We were talking about Raymond Joscelyn. They had been to Eton together, and loved one another like David and Jonathan. He spoke to me of their boyhood, and described the happiness of those dear far-off days. He knew that Raymond and I had been great friends, and soon began questioning me about him, for their duties had separated them, and of late they had met seldom. Sometimes across the table I tried to get a look from Allan, but I never could meet his eyes. I was greatly oppressed.

All at once—I do not know why—it seemed more than I could bear. To think that Raymond was lying alone somewhere, deep under the ground, and that life went on just the same without him. He had ever been thoughtful of others, so ready to help those in need—and already they had forgotten him. All his old friends were enjoying themselves as if he had never been; though only a week ago he had been one of them, and the finest and best of all.

I could not bear to hear any more about the proud, ambitious boy, I, who knew what Fate had done for the man; and how, when life had given him all that seemed worth possessing, it had decided that I should cross his path, and make him prefer death to life without me. I felt as if I had killed him with my own hands.

Tears filled my eyes. They began to pour down my cheeks. I put my hands over my face and began to sob. I rose and left the dinner-table. Mr. Pressgrave explained to the Viceroy that I was upset by what I had gone through in the morning, paying my last tribute to the man who had been my friend. They were certainly

all as kind as they knew how to be, but this did not touch me at the time. All I knew was that I must be away from the glare and all those happy people.

I remember that I was undressed and lying in bed. How I came there? Why? When? All this—did not matter to me. I was weeping as if my heart would break piece by piece, and it was for Raymond 'Joscelyn who had sought refuge in death because I could not love him.

Hands gently touched and caressed me, arms enfolded me as of old. Allan was beside me, for the first time for years. I believed he was mine again, and had come to tell me he loved me because he was grieved with my pain.

I opened my arms to him, my living love. I drew him to my breast. My sobs grew less as I told him all I suffered for Raymond Joscelyn. I kept nothing from him, not one word, not one thought. I told him everything, my intention to leave him, and how I had almost gone. At last, with hushed breath and tears, I spoke of Raymond's great love, and how he had died because he could not live without me. I wept all the tears which still were left. I spoke every thought I knew.

There was no reply. Your father drew away from me.

"Why did you not go with him?" came from his lips. "Why did you not go?"

"Allan, what are you saying? What do you mean?"

He shrank back. I could not see his face, but I knew what was written on it—I had seen it in flashes before—dread and hatred of me.

I drew closer to him and surrounded him again with my arms. I felt he was unwilling. But I held him as in a vice.

"Tell me the truth at last. I must know it now."

I clung to him. I believe for one brief instant he was again compelled by that magnetic force in me, the irresistible power which once had swayed us in hours of happiness, when we felt that if death were waiting for us we could not give it one moment's thought—or was it only pity for the woman who loved him and whom he had so irremediably wronged?

He seemed to seek for words. Did he wish to deceive me again? And then—they are his very words—I have had to remember them during all the years:

“Why did you not go? . . . Do you not understand that I meant you to go with him?”

.

At last I knew the truth, and it filled me with loathing and indignation.

For *that*, I had remained true. For *that*, Raymond Joscelyn had gone to his death.

LIX

ONLY books end in a climax, life never does.

With that night mine should have come to an end, but it went on, and in a few days your father and I left Simla.

After a violent cataclysm of nature in which thousands perish, others come to build new homes, and felicity returns to the place of devastation. Not so for me. I had known that love and mistrust may be one. I now had learnt the ultimate tragedy of love. It was desolateness linked into desolation. It was final, intended, absolute.

I had been for years his wife but in name, and faithful to him as the widow is to the dead whom she still loves.

There was nothing which I could forgive and then start life anew, growing fond of him though in another way. There was only the chasm, the terrible fact between us.

Why did I not leave him at once?

Marriage is a mysterious, a formidable chain. I have known many who bowed and smarted under it, or were being slowly killed; but they only thought of breaking the bonds after having suffered long.

He had spoilt my life irremediably. Even courage had gone. As the resounding footsteps of the sightseer, echoing through the cathedral, disturb the worshipper prostrate in his sorrow before God, the one thought ran like a dark current through all my other thoughts. My heart lay waste. I longed to turn towards Raymond; but at first I felt ashamed.

As days wore on I grew calmer. Nothing was outwardly changed in our lives. We sat at table, went out to parties, and people came to see us, just as before—only much oftener. There were no bitter words between your father and me, no reproaches of any kind—only commonplace, courteous dealings, as between two who are strangers and for some reason live side by side.

I had utterly changed. I, so impetuous, so careless, so wilful, had become inert, apathetic. The effort of life seemed more than I could bear.

Then came a night, when I was standing on the veranda fingering my revolver. I was thinking of the rioters, the *Sadhu*, and old dreams and hopes which were dead. I heard the latch of the door, and knew it was your father.

“What do you want?”

"You," he replied.

Hatred and intense scorn leapt up in me when I remembered the years I had waited.

"Do not come one step farther or I will kill myself."

This incident decided my fate. Courage had only waited for my call. I would be again the ruler of my children's lives.

"I shall leave by next mail," I said to your father in the morning. "Tell your people to have Reine and the boys ready for me. I shall bring them here for the winter, then send my sons to Eton."

Ever since the night in Simla your father had seemed afraid to thwart me; though it was but rarely I cared to exert my will. I cannot tell you why it was, but even to this desire which had been the first cause of our feud, he yielded.

.

We had reached home in the morning. You had gone to bed, and your father was lingering over dessert with his sons. They believed me in my boudoir; but I was sitting on the couch in the drawing-room close to the carved screens which divide the two rooms. Since I had Montfort and Laurent again, I believed they loved me. I am easily deceived, and I was in such need of their affection.

They were talking in whispers, then their voices grew louder. I heard your father questioning them and they spoke of their mother in a base and treacherous manner. I recognised Polly.

"And what do you think of her smoking cigarettes?" Montfort asked.

Then I heard Laurent's voice: "Isn't it awful?"

"Only bad women smoke," your father replied.

They were surprised when I stood before them.

"I knew you were a traitor," I said. "Your sons are worthy of you."

He followed me to my boudoir.

"I have tried to remain with you for my children's sake, but . . ."

"They hate you," he interrupted. "Don't stay for their sake."

Was it sorrow which blinded my judgment? Or was it the intense longing to be free? We decided to separate. He was to make me a handsome allowance. You were to go with your brothers for a time, but you would be given back to me.

"Put it down in writing—everything," I told him.

"You can trust me. You know I have always been generous with you as regards money."

Thus life took you all from me much more mercilessly than death would have done. Then at least I should have had your last caress, a tender word, a smile; but my sons left me without saying good-bye. You may remember how much we two suffered in parting, though it was only to be for a few weeks.

A traitor to the last—your father left you with Polly, and broke his word about the money which was to be settled upon me.

I have never troubled about monetary questions. I put my shoulder to the wheel in real earnest, for I had to live.

One day I heard from Dr. Linder that your father's days were numbered.

"He thinks it is the after-effect of typhoid, but as I told him he is dying of a broken heart for all the wrong he has done you."

Years afterwards a letter came from Belgium which had wandered far and long. It was from my friend

Sister Erasmus. She went to say farewell to your father when he was going back to Scotland. He took her two hands in his and said:

“Now she will never come back to me—and I am going home to die.”

At first I looked for work in France; but it is difficult there for a woman when the first youth is past, and I was a stranger in my own land.

I had once dreamt London should be my home. I have never regretted that I came here. I loved India and its glory. I still cherish it as part of my life; but London has become “the city of my soul.” In its greyness and its fogs, Nature from the first offered me her sympathy. It was balm for my spirit to see Westminster on a winter morning bathed in mist. I have learnt since to enjoy its glorious summer and late autumn days; but this only came gradually. I now cling to London, as one clings to a mother.

I love its people too, and feel part of them in all they have noblest and best. Their coldness, their dignified reserve, their unobtrusiveness, their lack of curiosity which permitted me to live on the surface of things until I recovered my hold on life, their helpful kindness, the unvarying politeness which I meet in the humble among whom I have cast my lot, their generosity, make me desire to finish my days here. I came to be closer to my children, but I understood long ago that if there were still life-force to be gathered anywhere it could only be in the land which gave birth to Raymond.

A few days after my arrival here, I went to Scotland. Polly said she had promised her brother that his children should never see their mother again. The solicitors were human, and proposed a meeting in their presence, but she made you all write a letter—they had not

the heart to show it to me, but they told me it was in her hand with your signatures—in which you refused to come. It was your right, according to Scotch law.

This was not my only attempt to see you. After years had passed, I determined to try again.

Early one summer morning, I stood before the semi-detached villa in Dunbar Place, rang the bell, and inquired from the servant for your brothers.

"The young gentlemen are still in the Highlands, but Miss Montrose and the young lady have come to prepare the house." Evidently Polly was bent on serving her nephews as she had served their father.

"Tell Miss Montrose I wish to see her."

The servant showed me into the room which had been your grandfather's, then came back:

"Miss Montrose sends her compliments, and would you please leave the house."

"Will you tell her I shall not move until my children arrive," was my reply. Presently I heard the key turn, and knew I was locked in. Of what were you afraid, I wonder?

I spent some hours in that room. Papers were lying about with Laurent's name on them—I had not seen his handwriting since childhood. There were his golf clubs. A canary in a cage was on the table—I have never been able to look at a caged bird since.

There was a photograph on the mantelpiece. I took it in my hand. Who could the girl be, with ill-fitting clothes and unbecomingly dressed hair? She had something about her so familiar to me! . . . I was still wondering when it flashed across me that this was my child, my own sweet little daughter who had grown up to be the living image of Polly. And I had always pictured you just like my beautiful mother!

326 A MOTHER IN EXILE

Some time elapsed, then the curator appointed by the court came. (The guardians named in your father's will had refused to act.) He was courteous, even kind, but he prevailed upon me to leave. It was not his business to show that he was sorry; still his manner bore that stamp.

I have never since tried to see you.

I came to London an utter stranger to look for work. Among the hundreds whom I had known two men were still interested in what might befall me—though no one could help me but myself. Mr. Woodford died soon; the other made of his high position a shield, and his name became my passport. He remained the same as when years ago in the brilliant days in India his *chits* and invitations were brought to me by mounted *sowar*. A greater personage even, whom I also knew in India, would have obtained favours for me; but I found work, and it was that I needed.

After my shipwreck there was at first a great, dead spot which made a dreary *Einerlei* of all that others call happiness. But life sounded its clarion, and I answered the bidding.

How did I face it? With the unconquerable determination never to doubt myself, never to look back; but to accept joyfully whatever lay before me.

Was the fight arduous? This matters little, since life has not vanquished me, and I am still to myself a stronghold. There may have been backslidings; but the small things of life hurt so dreadfully!

And now, like a sweet tale which the traveller relates after he has spoken of the perils and vicissitudes of his voyage, let me tell you that London held one treasure for me. It gave me the little friend, born in the same year as your sister who sleeps far away under the palms.

I have sometimes thought her soul had come back to me in the girl who is my little love, and whose sweet friendship has now been for so many years *mon rayon de soleil*. Loving, fearless and true, she is the child of my heart, soul and brain—my real daughter. I have moulded her, as I once believed I should mould you, to be what I wish you were, with a great and noble soul, clear brain, and loving, tender heart. How my mother would have loved this true daughter of mine!

It is good our dead do not know what their loved ones suffer. But what a comfort it would be to Raymond to know there is one left to love me!

My mother and you have lived with me while I wrote these pages. Of late I have thought even more of her than in the years which followed her death, when life lay before me full of promise. Now that all which once was sweet is past, her remembrance contains strength and comfort. I need her more than in those days when I opened my heart to take in joy, for now I steel it against the dark night I shall soon have to face.

Looking back I think that I have done with life just what I wanted to do. Had I been a man, I should have reached power, and swayed the destinies of many. Being a woman, I have only longed for love. It has filled my being, I have held it close to me, and basked in its sunshine and glory. I still believe it is the greatest treasure life holds.

I have borne its disillusion and heartaches—bravely I believe—for I knew from the outset that love such as mine only comes to life's chosen ones, *et que toutes les grandes amoureuses portent le cilice*. All great things are born with suffering; passion's road is barren waste and leads to burning Thebaid. Still love was the best part of my life.

When Love left me desolate, I learnt that it always remains life's moving, immortal force. Nothing we sow is quickened, except it dies. I determined that my suffering should not be lost to the world; I resolved to kill the pain of my own heart by sharing the pain of others, to live in ever new energies, in border sympathies, in noble purpose.

Do you understand that I have conquered life and made it subservient to my will?

There now only remains to say good-bye, *ma petite*, and, though life has separated us, my own child, my hand trembles, and tears fill my eyes when I think that some day you will touch these sheets.

If you had loved me, child, I would say: "Do not grieve." You have not loved me; still, I say: "Do not be sad for me." Though my life cannot be measured by the common standard, it has been a good, a very good thing, and I have loved it!

THE END

PROPERTY
OF THE
NEW YORK
SOCIETY LIBRARY

1

2

3

